



THE SIEGE OF LONDON,

THE PENSION BEAUREPAS,

AND

THE POINT OF VIEW.

BY

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"THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY," ETC.



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THE SIEGE OF LONDON.



THE SIEGE OF LONDON.

PART I.

I.

THAT solemn piece of upholstery, the curtain of the Comédie Française, had fallen upon the first act of the piece, and our two Americans had taken advantage of the interval to pass out of the huge, hot theatre, in company with the other occupants of the stalls. But they were among the first to return, and they beguiled the rest of the intermission with looking at the house, which had lately been cleansed of its historic cobwebs and ornamented with frescos illustrative of the classic drama. In the month of September the audience at the Théâtre Français is comparatively thin, and on this occasion the drama — *L'Aventurière* of Emile Augier — had no pretensions to novelty. Many of the boxes were empty, others were occupied by persons of provincial or nomadic appearance. The boxes are far from the stage, near which our spectators were placed; but even at a distance Rupert Waterville was able to appreciate certain details. He was fond of appreciating details,

and when he went to the theatre he looked about him a good deal, making use of a dainty but remarkably powerful glass. He knew that such a course was wanting in true distinction, and that it was indelicate to level at a lady an instrument which was often only less injurious in effect than a double-barrelled pistol ; but, he was always very curious, and he was sure, in any case, that at that moment, at that antiquated play — so he was pleased to qualify the masterpiece of an Academician — he would not be observed by any one he knew. Standing up therefore with his back to the stage, he made the circuit of the boxes, while several other persons, near him, performed the same operation with even greater coolness.

“Not a single pretty woman,” he remarked at last to his friend ; an observation which Littlemore, sitting in his place and staring with a bored expression at the new-looking curtain, received in perfect silence. He rarely indulged in these optical excursions ; he had been a great deal in Paris and had ceased to care about it, or wonder about it, much ; he fancied that the French capital could have no more surprises for him, though it had had a good many in former days. Waterville was still in the stage of surprise ; he suddenly expressed this emotion. “By Jove !” he exclaimed ; “I beg your pardon — I beg *her* pardon — there is, after all, a woman that may be called” — he paused a little, inspecting her — “a kind of beauty !”

“What kind ?” Littlemore asked, vaguely.

“An unusual kind — an indescribable kind.” Lit-

Littlemore was not heeding his answer, but he presently heard himself appealed to. "I say, I wish very much you would do me a favor."

"I did you a favor in coming here," said Littlemore. "It's insufferably hot, and the play is like a dinner that has been dressed by the kitchen-maid. The actors are all *doublures*."

"It's simply to answer me this : is *she* respectable, now?" Waterville rejoined, inattentive to his friend's epigram.

Littlemore gave a groan, without turning his head. "You are always wanting to know if they are respectable. What on earth can it matter?"

"I have made such mistakes — I have lost all confidence," said poor Waterville, to whom European civilization had not ceased to be a novelty, and who during the last six months had found himself confronted with problems long unsuspected. Whenever he encountered a very nice-looking woman, he was sure to discover that she belonged to the class represented by the heroine of M. Augier's drama; and whenever his attention rested upon a person of a florid style of attraction, there was the strongest probability that she would turn out to be a countess. The countesses looked so superficial and the others looked so exclusive. Now Littlemore distinguished at a glance; he never made mistakes.

"Simply for looking at them, it does n't matter, I suppose," said Waterville, ingenuously, answering his companion's rather cynical inquiry.

"You stare at them all alike," Littlemore went on, still without moving; "except indeed when I tell you that they are not respectable — then your attention acquires a fixedness!"

"If your judgment is against this lady, I promise never to look at her again. I mean the one in the third box from the passage, in white, with the red flowers," he added, as Littlemore slowly rose and stood beside him. "The young man is leaning forward. It is the young man that makes me doubt of her. Will you have the glass?"

Littlemore looked about him without concentration. "No, I thank you, my eyes are good enough. The young man's a very good young man," he added in a moment.

"Very indeed; but he's several years younger than she. Wait till she turns her head."

She turned it very soon — she apparently had been speaking to the *ouvreuse*, at the door of the box — and presented her face to the public — a fair, well-drawn face, with smiling eyes, smiling lips, ornamented over the brow with delicate rings of black hair and, in each ear, with the sparkle of a diamond sufficiently large to be seen across the Théâtre Français. Littlemore looked at her; then, abruptly, he gave an exclamation. "Give me the glass!"

"Do you know her?" his companion asked, as he directed the little instrument.

Littlemore made no answer; he only looked in silence; then he handed back the glass. "No, she's

not respectable," he said. And he dropped into his seat again. As Waterville remained standing, he added, "Please sit down; I think she saw me."

"Don't you want her to see you?" asked Waterville the interrogator, taking his seat.

Littlemore hesitated. "I don't want to spoil her game." By this time the *entr'acte* was at an end; the curtain rose again.

It had been Waterville's idea that they should go to the theatre. Littlemore, who was always for not doing a thing, had recommended that, the evening being lovely, they should simply sit and smoke at the door of the Grand Café, in a decent part of the Boulevard. Nevertheless Rupert Waterville enjoyed the second act even less than he had done the first, which he thought heavy. He began to wonder whether his companion would wish to stay to the end; a useless line of speculation, for now that he had got to the theatre, Littlemore's objection to doing things would certainly keep him from going. Waterville also wondered what he knew about the lady in the box. Once or twice he glanced at his friend, and then he saw that Littlemore was not following the play. He was thinking of something else; he was thinking of that woman. When the curtain fell again he sat in his place, making way for his neighbors, as usual, to edge past him, grinding his knees — his legs were long — with their own protuberances. When the two men were alone in the stalls, Littlemore said: "I think I should like to see her again, after all."

He spoke as if Waterville might have known all about her. Waterville was conscious of not doing so, but as there was evidently a good deal to know, he felt that he should lose nothing by being a little discreet. So, for the moment, he asked no questions; he only said —

“ Well, here’s the glass.”

Littlemore gave him a glance of good-natured compassion. “ I don’t mean that I want to stare at her with that beastly thing. I mean — to see her — as I used to see her.”

“ How did you use to see her ?” asked Waterville, bidding farewell to discretion.

“ On the back piazza, at San Diego.” And as his interlocutor, in receipt of this information, only stared, he went on — “ Come out where we can breathe, and I’ll tell you more.”

They made their way to the low and narrow door, more worthy of a rabbit-hutch than of a great theatre, by which you pass from the stalls of the Comédie to the lobby, and as Littlemore went first, his ingenuous friend, behind him, could see that he glanced up at the box in the occupants of which they were interested. The more interesting of these had her back to the house; she was apparently just leaving the box, after her companion; but as she had not put on her mantle it was evident that they were not quitting the theatre. Littlemore’s pursuit of fresh air did not lead him into the street; he had passed his arm into Waterville’s, and when they reached that fine frigid

staircase which ascends to the Foyer, he began silently to mount it. Littlemore was averse to active pleasures, but his friend reflected that now at least he had launched himself—he was going to look for the lady whom, with a monosyllable, he appeared to have classified. The young man resigned himself for the moment to asking no questions, and the two strolled together into the shining saloon where Houdon's admirable statue of Voltaire, reflected in a dozen mirrors, is gaped at by visitors obviously less acute than the genius expressed in those living features. Waterville knew that Voltaire was very witty; he had read *Candide*, and had already had several opportunities of appreciating the statue. The Foyer was not crowded; only a dozen groups were scattered over the polished floor, several others having passed out to the balcony which overhangs the square of the Palais Royal. The windows were open, the brilliant lights of Paris made the dull summer evening look like an anniversary or a revolution; a murmur of voices seemed to come up from the streets, and even in the Foyer one heard the slow click of the horses and the rumble of the crookedly-driven fiacres on the hard, smooth asphalt. A lady and a gentleman, with their backs to our friends, stood before the image of Voltaire; the lady was dressed in white, including a white bonnet. Littlemore felt, as so many persons feel in that spot, that the scene was conspicuously Parisian, and he gave a mysterious laugh.

"It seems comical to see her here! The last time was in New Mexico."

"In New Mexico?"

"At San Diego."

"Oh, on the back piazza," said Waterville, putting things together. He had not been aware of the position of San Diego, for if on the occasion of his lately being appointed to a subordinate diplomatic post in London, he had been paying a good deal of attention to European geography, he had rather neglected that of his own country.

They had not spoken loud, and they were not standing near her; but suddenly, as if she had heard them, the lady in white turned round. Her eye caught Waterville's first, and in that glance he saw that if she had heard them it was not because they were audible but because she had extraordinary quickness of ear. There was no recognition in it—there was none, at first, even when it rested lightly upon George Littlemore. But recognition flashed out a moment later, accompanied with a delicate increase of color and a quick extension of her apparently constant smile. She had turned completely round; she stood there in sudden friendliness, with parted lips, with a hand, gloved to the elbow, almost imperiously offered. She was even prettier than at a distance. "Well, I declare!" she exclaimed; so loud that every one in the room appeared to feel personally addressed. Waterville was surprised; he had not been prepared, even after the mention of the back piazza, to find her

an American. Her companion turned round as she spoke; he was a fresh, lean young man, in evening dress; he kept his hands in his pockets; Waterville imagined that he at any rate was not an American. He looked very grave — for such a fair, festive young man — and gave Waterville and Littlemore, though his height was not superior to theirs, a narrow, vertical glance. Then he turned back to the statue of Voltaire, as if it had been, after all, among his premonitions that the lady he was attending would recognize people he didn't know, and didn't even, perhaps, care to know. This possibly confirmed slightly Littlemore's assertion that she was not respectable. The young man was, at least; consummately so. "Where in the world did you drop from?" the lady inquired.

"I have been here some time," Littlemore said, going forward, rather deliberately, to shake hands with her. He smiled a little, but he was more serious than she; he kept his eye on her own as if she had been just a trifle dangerous; it was the manner in which a duly discreet person would have approached some glossy, graceful animal which had an occasional trick of biting.

"Here in Paris, do you mean?"

"No; here and there — in Europe generally."

"Well, it's queer I have n't met you."

"Better late than never!" said Littlemore. His smile was a little fixed.

"Well, you look very natural," the lady went on.

"So do you — or very charming — it's the same thing," Littlemore answered, laughing, and evidently wishing to be easy. It was as if, face to face, and after a considerable lapse of time, he had found her more imposing than he expected when, in the stalls below, he determined to come and meet her. As he spoke, the young man who was with her gave up his inspection of Voltaire and faced about, listlessly, without looking either at Littlemore or at Waterville.

"I want to introduce you to my friend," she went on. "Sir Arthur Demesne — Mr. Littlemore. Mr. Littlemore — Sir Arthur Demesne. Sir Arthur Demesne is an Englishman — Mr. Littlemore is a countryman of mine, an old friend. I haven't seen him for years. For how long? Don't let's count! — I wonder you knew me," she continued, addressing Littlemore. "I'm fearfully changed." All this was said in a clear, gay tone, which was the more audible as she spoke with a kind of caressing slowness. The two men, to do honor to her introduction, silently exchanged a glance; the Englishman, perhaps, colored a little. He was very conscious of his companion. "I haven't introduced you to many people yet," she remarked.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Sir Arthur Demesne.

"Well, it's queer to see you!" she exclaimed, looking still at Littlemore. "You have changed, too — I can see that."

"Not where you are concerned."

"That's what I want to find out. Why don't you

introduce your friend? I see he's dying to know me!"

Littlemore proceeded to this ceremony; but he reduced it to its simplest elements, merely glancing at Rupert Waterville, and murmuring his name.

"You didn't tell him *my* name," the lady cried, while Waterville made her a formal salutation. "I hope you have n't forgotten it!"

Littlemore gave her a glance which was intended to be more penetrating than what he had hitherto permitted himself; if it had been put into words it would have said, "Ah, but *which* name?"

She answered the unspoken question, putting out her hand, as she had done to Littlemore, "Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Waterville. I'm Mrs. Headway — perhaps you've heard of me. If you've ever been in America, you must have heard of me. Not so much in New York, but in the Western cities. You *are* an American? Well, then, we are all compatriots — except Sir Arthur Demesne. Let me introduce you to Sir Arthur. Sir Arthur Demesne, Mr. Waterville — Mr. Waterville, Sir Arthur Demesne. Sir Arthur Demesne is a member of Parliament; don't he look young?" She waited for no answer to this question, but suddenly asked another, as she moved her bracelets back over her long, loose gloves. "Well, Mr. Littlemore, what are you thinking of?"

He was thinking that he must indeed have forgotten her name, for the one that she had pronounced

awakened no association. But he could hardly tell her that.

"I'm thinking of San Diego."

"The back piazza, at my sister's? Oh, don't; it was too horrid. She has left now. I believe every one has left."

Sir Arthur Demesne drew out his watch with the air of a man who could take no part in these domestic reminiscences; he appeared to combine a generic self-possession with a degree of individual shyness. He said something about its being time they should go back to their seats, but Mrs. Headway paid no attention to the remark. Waterville wished her to linger; he felt in looking at her as if he had been looking at a charming picture. Her low-growing hair, with its fine dense undulations, was of a shade of blackness that has now become rare; her complexion had the bloom of a white flower; her profile, when she turned her head, was as pure and fine as the outline of a cameo.

"You know this is the first theatre," she said to Waterville, as if she wished to be sociable. "And this is Voltaire, the celebrated writer."

"I'm devoted to the Comédie Française," Watervillè answered, smiling.

"Dreadfully bad house; we didn't hear a word," said Sir Arthur.

"Ah, yes, the boxes!" murmured Waterville.

"I'm rather disappointed," Mrs. Headway went on.

"But I want to see what becomes of that woman."

"Doña Clorinde? Oh, I suppose they'll shoot her; they generally shoot the women, in French plays," Littlemore said.

"It will remind me of San Diego!" cried Mrs. Headway.

"Ah, at San Diego the women did the shooting."

"They don't seem to have killed you!" Mrs. Headway rejoined, archly.

"No, but I am riddled with wounds."

"Well, this is very remarkable," the lady went on, turning to Houdon's statue. "It's beautifully modelled."

"You are perhaps reading M. de Voltaire," Littlemore suggested.

"No; but I've purchased his works."

"They are not proper reading for ladies," said the young Englishman, severely, offering his arm to Mrs. Headway.

"Ah, you might have told me before I had bought them!" she exclaimed, in exaggerated dismay.

"I could n't imagine you would buy a hundred and fifty volumes."

"A hundred and fifty? I have only bought two."

"Perhaps two won't hurt you?" said Littlemore with a smile.

She darted him a reproachful ray. "I know what you mean,—that I'm too bad already! Well, bad as I am, you must come and see me." And she threw him the name of her hotel, as she walked away with her Englishman. Waterville looked after the

latter with a certain interest ; he had heard of him in London, and had seen his portrait in "Vanity Fair."

It was not yet time to go down, in spite of this gentleman's saying so, and Littlemore and his friend passed out on the balcony of the Foyer. "Headway — Headway? Where the deuce did she get that name?" Littlemore asked, as they looked down into the animated dusk.

"From her husband, I suppose," Waterville suggested.

"From her husband? From which? The last was named Beck."

"How many has she had?" Waterville inquired, anxious to hear how it was that Mrs. Headway was not respectable.

"I have n't the least idea. But it would n't be difficult to find out, as I believe they are all living. She was Mrs. Beck — Nancy Beck — when I knew her."

"Nancy Beck!" cried Waterville, aghast. He was thinking of her delicate profile, like that of a pretty Roman empress. There was a great deal to be explained.

Littlemore explained it in a few words before they returned to their places, admitting indeed that he was not yet able to elucidate her present situation. She was a memory of his Western days ; he had seen her last some six years before. He had known her very well and in several places ; the circle of her activity was chiefly the Southwest. This activity was of a vague character, except in the sense that it

was exclusively social. She was supposed to have a husband, one Philadelphus Beck, the editor of a Democratic newspaper, the *Dakotah Sentinel*; but Littlemore had never seen him — the pair were living apart — and it was the impression at San Diego that matrimony, for Mr. and Mrs. Beck, was about played out. He remembered now to have heard afterwards that she was getting a divorce. She got divorces very easily, she was so taking in court. She had got one or two before from a man whose name he had forgotten, and there was a legend that even these were not the first. She had been exceedingly divorced! When he first met her in California, she called herself Mrs. Grenville, which he had been given to understand was not an appellation acquired in matrimony, but her parental name, resumed after the dissolution of an unfortunate union. She had had these episodes — her unions were all unfortunate — and had borne half a dozen names. She was a charming woman, especially for New Mexico; but she had been divorced too often — it was a tax on one's credulity; she must have repudiated more husbands than she had married.

At San Diego she was staying with her sister, whose actual spouse (she, too, had been divorced), the principal man of the place, kept a bank (with the aid of a six-shooter), and who had never suffered Nancy to want for a home during her unattached periods. Nancy had begun very young; she must be about thirty-seven to-day. That was all he meant

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by her not being respectable. The chronology was rather mixed; her sister at least had once told him that there was one winter when she did n't know herself *who* was Nancy's husband. She had gone in mainly for editors — she esteemed the journalistic profession. They must all have been dreadful ruffians, for her own amiability was manifest. It was well known that whatever she had done she had done in self-defence. In fine, she had done things; that was the main point now! She was very pretty, good-natured and clever, and quite the best company in those parts. She was a genuine product of the far West — a flower of the Pacific slope; ignorant, audacious, crude, but full of pluck and spirit, of natural intelligence, and of a certain intermittent, haphazard good taste. She used to say that she only wanted a chance — apparently she had found it now. At one time, without her, he did n't see how he could have put up with the life. He had started a cattle-ranch, to which San Diego was the nearest town, and he used to ride over to see her. Sometimes he stayed there for a week; then he went to see her every evening. It was horribly hot; they used to sit on the back piazza. She was always as attractive, and very nearly as well-dressed, as they had just beheld her. As far as appearance went, she might have been transplanted at an hour's notice from that dusty old settlement to the city by the Seine.

“Some of those Western women are wonderful,” Littlemore said. “Like her, they only want a chance.”

He had not been in love with her — there never was anything of that sort between them. There might have been of course ; but as it happened there was not. Headway apparently was the successor of Beck ; perhaps there had been others between. She was in no sort of “society ;” she only had a local reputation (“the elegant and accomplished Mrs. Beck,” the newspapers called her—the other editors, to whom she was n’t married), though, indeed, in that spacious civilization the locality was large. She knew nothing of the East, and to the best of his belief at that period had never seen New York. Various things might have happened in those six years, however ; no doubt she had “come up.” The West was sending us everything (Littlemore spoke as a New Yorker) ; no doubt it would send us at last our brilliant women. This little woman used to look quite over the head of New York ; even in those days she thought and talked of Paris, which there was no prospect of her knowing ; that was the way she had got on in New Mexico. She had had her ambition, her presentiments ; she had known she was meant for better things. Even at San Diego she had prefigured her little Sir Arthur ; every now and then a wandering Englishman came within her range. They were not all baronets and M. P.’s, but they were usually a change from the editors. What she was doing with her present acquisition he was curious to see. She was certainly — if he had any capacity for that state of mind, which was not too apparent — making

him happy. She looked very splendid; Headway had probably made a "pile," an achievement not to be imputed to any of the others. She didn't accept money — he was sure she didn't accept money.

On their way back to their seats Littlemore, whose tone had been humorous, but with that strain of the pensive which is inseparable from retrospect, suddenly broke into audible laughter.

"The modelling of a statue and the works of Voltaire!" he exclaimed, recurring to two or three things she had said. "It's comical to hear her attempt those flights, for in New Mexico she knew nothing about modelling."

"She didn't strike me as affected," Waterville rejoined, feeling a vague impulse to take a considerate view of her.

"Oh, no; she's only — as she says — fearfully changed."

They were in their places before the play went on again, and they both gave another glance at Mrs. Headway's box. She leaned back, slowly fanning herself, and evidently watching Littlemore, as if she had been waiting to see him come in. Sir Arthur Demesne sat beside her, rather gloomily, resting a round pink chin upon a high stiff collar; neither of them seemed to speak.

"Are you sure she makes him happy?" Waterville asked.

"Yes — that's the way those people show it."

"But does she go about alone with him that way? Where's her husband?"

"I suppose she has divorced him."

"And does she want to marry the baronet?" Waterville asked, as if his companion were omniscient.

It amused Littlemore for the moment to appear so.
"He wants to marry her, I guess."

"And be divorced, like the others?"

"Oh, no; this time she has got what she wants," said Littlemore, as the curtain rose.

He suffered three days to elapse before he called at the Hôtel Meurice, which she had designated, and we may occupy this interval in adding a few words to the story we have taken from his lips. George Littlemore's residence in the far West had been of the usual tentative sort — he had gone there to replenish a pocket depleted by youthful extravagance. His first attempts had failed; the days were passing away when a fortune was to be picked up even by a young man who might be supposed to have inherited from an honorable father, lately removed, some of those fine abilities, mainly dedicated to the importation of tea, to which the elder Mr. Littlemore was indebted for the power of leaving his son well off. Littlemore had dissipated his patrimony, and he was not quick to discover his talents, which, consisting chiefly of an unlimited faculty for smoking and horse-breaking, appeared to lie in the direction of none of the professions called liberal. He had been sent to Harvard to have his aptitudes cultivated, but here they took such a form that repression had been found more necessary than stimulus — repression

embodied in an occasional sojourn in one of the lovely villages of the Connecticut valley. Rustication saved him, perhaps, in the sense that it detached him ; it destroyed his ambitions, which had been foolish. At the age of thirty, Littlemore had mastered none of the useful arts, unless we include in the number the great art of indifference. He was roused from his indifference by a stroke of good luck. To oblige a friend who was even in more pressing need of cash than himself, he had purchased for a moderate sum (the proceeds of a successful game of poker) a share in a silver-mine which the disposer, with unusual candor, admitted to be destitute of metal. Littlemore looked into his mine and recognized the truth of the contention, which, however, was demolished some two years later by a sudden revival of curiosity on the part of one of the other shareholders. This gentleman, convinced that a silver-mine without silver is as rare as an effect without a cause, discovered the sparkle of the precious element deep down in the reasons of things. The discovery was agreeable to Littlemore, and was the beginning of a fortune which, through several dull years and in many rough places, he had repeatedly despaired of, and which a man whose purpose was never very keen did not perhaps altogether deserve. It was before he saw himself successful that he had made the acquaintance of the lady now established at the Hôtel Meurice. To-day he owned the largest share in his mine, which remained perversely productive, and which enabled

him to buy, among other things, in Montana, a cattle-ranch of much finer proportions than the dry acres near San Diego. Ranches and mines encourage security, and the consciousness of not having to watch the sources of his income too anxiously (an obligation which for a man of his disposition spoils everything) now added itself to his usual coolness. It was not that this same coolness had not been considerably tried. To take only one — the principal — instance: he had lost his wife after only a twelve-month of marriage, some three years before the date at which we meet him. He was more than forty when he encountered and wooed a young girl of twenty-three, who, like himself, had consulted all the probabilities in expecting a succession of happy years. She left him a small daughter, now intrusted to the care of his only sister, the wife of an English squire and mistress of a dull park in Hampshire. This lady, Mrs. Dolphin by name, had captivated her landowner during a journey in which Mr. Dolphin had promised himself to examine the institutions of the United States. The institution on which he reported most favorably was the pretty girls of the larger towns, and he returned to New York a year or two later to marry Miss Littlemore, who, unlike her brother, had not wasted her patrimony. Her sister-in-law, married many years later, and coming to Europe on this occasion, had died in London — where she flattered herself the doctors were infallible — a week after the birth of her little girl; and poor Little-

more, though relinquishing his child for the moment, remained in these disappointing countries, to be within call of the Hampshire nursery. He was rather a noticeable man, especially since his hair and mustache had turned white. Tall and strong, with a good figure and a bad carriage, he looked capable but indolent, and was usually supposed to have an importance of which he was far from being conscious. His eye was at once keen and quiet, his smile dim and dilatory, but exceedingly genuine. His principal occupation to-day was doing nothing, and he did it with a sort of artistic perfection. This faculty excited real envy on the part of Rupert Waterville, who was ten years younger than he, and who had too many ambitions and anxieties — none of them very important, but making collectively a considerable incubus — to be able to wait for inspiration. He thought it a great accomplishment, he hoped some day to arrive at it; it made a man so independent; he had his resources within his own breast. Little more could sit for a whole evening, without utterance or movement, smoking cigars and looking absently at his finger-nails. As every one knew that he was a good fellow and had made his fortune, this dull behavior could not well be attributed to stupidity or to moroseness. It seemed to imply a fund of reminiscence, an experience of life which had left him hundreds of things to think about. Waterville felt that if he could make a good use of these present years, and keep a sharp look-out for experience, he too, at

forty-five, might have time to look at his finger-nails. He had an idea that such contemplations — not of course in their literal, but in their symbolic intensity — were a sign of a man of the world. Waterville, reckoning possibly without an ungrateful Department of State, had also an idea that he had embraced the diplomatic career. He was the junior of the two Secretaries who render the *personnel* of the United States Legation in London exceptionally numerous, and was at present enjoying his annual leave of absence. It became a diplomatist to be inscrutable, and though he had by no means, as a whole, taken Littlemore as his model — there were much better ones in the diplomatic body in London — he thought he looked inscrutable when of an evening, in Paris, after he had been asked what he would like to do, he replied that he should like to do nothing, and simply sat for an interminable time in front of the Grand Café, on the Boulevard de la Madeleine (he was very fond of cafés), ordering a succession of *demi-tasses*. It was very rarely that Littlemore cared even to go to the theatre, and the visit to the Comédie Française, which we have described, had been undertaken at Waterville's instance. He had seen *Le Demi-Monde* a few nights before, and had been told that *L'Aventurière* would show him a particular treatment of the same subject — the justice to be meted out to unscrupulous women who attempt to thrust themselves into honorable families. It seemed to him that in both of these cases the ladies had deserved

their fate, but he wished it might have been brought about by a little less lying on the part of the representatives of honor. Littlemore and he, without being intimate, were very good friends, and spent much of their time together. As it turned out, Littlemore was very glad he had gone to the theatre, for he found himself much interested in this new incarnation of Nancy Beck.

II.

HIS delay in going to see her was nevertheless calculated; there were more reasons for it than it is necessary to mention. But when he went, Mrs. Headway was at home, and Littlemore was not surprised to see Sir Arthur Demesne in her sitting-room. There was something in the air which seemed to indicate that this gentleman's visit had already lasted a certain time. Littlemore thought it probable that, given the circumstances, he would now bring it to a close; he must have learned from their hostess that Littlemore was an old and familiar friend. He might of course have definite rights — he had every appearance of it; but the more definite they were the more gracefully he could afford to waive them. Littlemore made these reflections while Sir Arthur Demesne sat there looking at him without giving any sign of departure. Mrs. Headway was very gracious — she had the manner of having known you a hundred

years; she scolded Littlemore extravagantly for not having been to see her sooner, but this was only a form of the gracious. By daylight she looked a little faded; but she had an expression which could never fade. She had the best rooms in the hotel, and an air of extreme opulence and prosperity; her courier sat outside, in the ante-chamber, and she evidently knew how to live. She attempted to include Sir Arthur in the conversation, but though the young man remained in his place, he declined to be included. He smiled, in silence; but he was evidently uncomfortable. The conversation, therefore, remained superficial — a quality that, of old, had by no means belonged to Mrs. Headway's interviews with her friends. The Englishman looked at Littlemore with a strange, perverse expression which Littlemore, at first, with a good deal of private amusement, simply attributed to jealousy.

“My dear Sir Arthur, I wish very much you would go,” Mrs. Headway remarked, at the end of a quarter of an hour.

Sir Arthur got up and took his hat. “I thought I should oblige you by staying.”

“To defend me against Mr. Littlemore? I’ve known him since I was a baby — I know the worst he can do.” She fixed her charming smile for a moment on her retreating visitor, and she added, with much unexpectedness, “I want to talk to him about my past!”

“That’s just what I want to hear,” said Sir Arthur, with his hand on the door.

"We are going to talk American ; you would n't understand us ! — He speaks in the English style," she explained, in her little sufficient way, as the baronet, who announced that at all events he would come back in the evening, let himself out.

"He does n't know about your past ?" Littlemore inquired, trying not to make the question sound impertinent.

"Oh, yes ; I've told him everything ; but he does n't understand. The English are so peculiar ; I think they are rather stupid. He has never heard of a woman being —" But here Mrs. Headway checked herself, while Littlemore filled out the blank. "What are you laughing at ? It does n't matter," she went on ; "there are more things in the world than those people have heard of. However, I like them very much ; at least I like him. He's such a gentleman ; do you know what I mean ? Only, he stays too long, and he is n't amusing. I'm very glad to see you, for a change."

"Do you mean I'm not a gentleman ?" Littlemore asked.

"No indeed ; you used to be, in New Mexico. I think you were the only one — and I hope you are still. That's why I recognized you the other night ; I might have cut you, you know."

"You can still, if you like. It's not too late."

"Oh, no ; that's not what I want. I want you to help me."

"To help you ?"

Mrs. Headway fixed her eyes for a moment on the door. "Do you suppose that man is there still?"

"That young man — your poor Englishman?"

"No; I mean Max. Max is my courier," said Mrs. Headway, with a certain impressiveness.

"I have n't the least idea. I'll see, if you like."

"No; in that case I should have to give him an order, and I don't know what in the world to ask him to do. He sits there for hours; with my simple habits I afford him no employment. I am afraid I have no imagination."

"The burden of grandeur," said Littlemore.

"Oh yes, I'm very grand. But on the whole I like it. I'm only afraid he'll hear. I talk so very loud; that's another thing I'm trying to get over."

"Why do you want to be different?"

"Well, because everything else is different," Mrs. Headway rejoined, with a little sigh. "Did you hear that I'd lost my husband?" she went on, abruptly.

"Do you mean — a — Mr. ——?" and Littlemore paused, with an effect that did not seem to come home to her.

"I mean Mr. Headway," she said, with dignity. "I've been through a good deal since you saw me last: marriage, and death, and trouble, and all sorts of things."

"You had been through a good deal of marriage before that," Littlemore ventured to observe.

She rested her eyes on him with soft brightness,

and without a change of color. "Not so much — not so much —"

"Not so much as might have been thought."

"Not so much as was reported. I forget whether I was married when I saw you last."

"It was one of the reports," said Littlemore. "But I never saw Mr. Beck."

"You did n't lose much; he was a simple *wretch*! I have done certain things in my life which I have never understood; no wonder others can't understand them. But that's all over! Are you sure Max does n't hear?" she asked, quickly.

"Not at all sure. But if you suspect him of listening at the keyhole, I would send him away."

"I don't think he does that. I am always rushing to the door."

"Then he does n't hear. I had no idea you had so many secrets. When I parted with you, Mr. Headway was in the future."

"Well, now he's in the past. He was a pleasant man — I can understand my doing that. But he only lived a year. He had neuralgia of the heart; he left me very well off." She mentioned these various facts as if they were quite of the same order.

"I'm glad to hear it; you used to have expensive tastes."

"I have plenty of money," said Mrs. Headway. "Mr. Headway had property at Denver, which has increased immensely in value. After his death I tried New York. But I don't like New York." Lit-

Littlemore's hostess uttered this last sentence in a tone which was the *résumé* of a social episode. "I mean to live in Europe — I like Europe," she announced; and the manner of the announcement had a touch of prophecy, as the other words had had a reverberation of history.

Littlemore was very much struck with all this, and he was greatly entertained with Mrs. Headway. "Are you travelling with that young man?" he inquired, with the coolness of a person who wishes to make his entertainment go as far as possible.

She folded her arms as she leaned back in her chair. "Look here, Mr. Littlemore," she said; "I'm about as good-natured as I used to be in America, but I know a great deal more. Of course I ain't travelling with that young man; he's only a friend."

"He is n't a lover?" asked Littlemore, rather cruelly.

"Do people travel with their lovers? I don't want you to laugh at me — I want you to help me." She fixed her eyes on him with an air of tender remonstrance that might have touched him; she looked so gentle and reasonable. "As I tell you, I have taken a great fancy to this old Europe; I feel as if I should never go back. But I want to see something of the life. I think it would suit me — if I could get started a little. Mr. Littlemore," she added, in a moment — "I may as well be frank, for I ain't at all ashamed. I want to get into society. That's what I'm after!"

Littlemore settled himself in his chair, with the feeling of a man who, knowing that he will have to pull, seeks to obtain a certain leverage. It was in a tone of light jocosity, almost of encouragement, however, that he repeated: "Into society? It seems to me you are in it already, with baronets for your adorers."

"That's just what I want to know!" she said, with a certain eagerness. "Is a baronet much?"

"So they are apt to think. But I know very little about it."

"Ain't you in society yourself?"

"I? Never in the world! Where did you get that idea? I care no more about society than about that copy of the *Figaro*."

Mrs. Headway's countenance assumed for a moment a look of extreme disappointment, and Littlemore could see that, having heard of his silver-mine and his cattle-ranch, and knowing that he was living in Europe, she had hoped to find him immersed in the world of fashion. But she speedily recovered herself. "I don't believe a word of it. You know you're a gentleman — you can't help yourself."

"I may be a gentleman, but I have none of the habits of one." Littlemore hesitated a moment, and then he added — "I lived too long in the great South-west."

She flushed quickly; she instantly understood — understood even more that he had meant to say. But she wished to make use of him, and it was of

more importance that she should appear forgiving — especially as she had the happy consciousness of being so, than that she should punish a cruel speech. She could afford, however, to be lightly ironical. “That makes no difference — a gentleman is always a gentleman.”

“Not always,” said Littlemore, laughing.

“It’s impossible that, through your sister, you should n’t know something about European society,” said Mrs. Headway.

At the mention of his sister, made with a studied lightness of reference which he caught as it passed, Littlemore was unable to repress a start. “What in the world have you got to do with my sister?” he would have liked to say. The introduction of this lady was disagreeable to him; she belonged to quite another order of ideas, and it was out of the question that Mrs. Headway should ever make her acquaintance — if this was what, as that lady would have said — she was “after.” But he took advantage of a side-issue. “What do you mean by European society? One can’t talk about that. It’s a very vague phrase.”

“Well, I mean English society — I mean the society your sister lives in — that’s what I mean,” said Mrs. Headway, who was quite prepared to be definite. “I mean the people I saw in London last May — the people I saw at the opera and in the park, the people who go to the Queen’s drawing-rooms. When I was in London I stayed at that hotel on the corner

of Piccadilly — that looking straight down St. James's Street — and I spent hours together at the window looking at the people in the carriages. I had a carriage of my own, and when I was not at my window I was driving all round. I was all alone ; I saw every one, but I knew no one — I had no one to tell me. I didn't know Sir Arthur then — I only met him a month ago at Homburg. He followed me to Paris — that's how he came to be my guest." Serenely, prosaically, without any of the inflation of vanity, Mrs. Headway made this last assertion ; it was as if she were used to being followed, or as if a gentleman one met at Homburg would inevitably follow. In the same tone she went on : " I attracted a good deal of attention in London — I could easily see that."

" You'll do that wherever you go," Littlemore said, insufficiently enough, as he felt.

" I don't want to attract so much ; I think it's vulgar," Mrs. Headway rejoined, with a certain soft sweetness which seemed to denote the enjoyment of a new idea. She was evidently open to new ideas.

" Every one was looking at you the other night at the theatre," Littlemore continued. " How can you hope to escape notice ?"

" I don't want to escape notice — people have always looked at me, and I suppose they always will. But there are different ways of being looked at, and I know the way I want. I mean to have it, too !" Mrs. Headway exclaimed. Yes, she was very definite.

Littlemore sat there, face to face with her, and for some time he said nothing. He had a mixture of feelings, and the memory of other places, other hours, was stealing over him. There had been of old a very considerable absence of interposing surfaces between these two—he had known her as one knew people only in the great Southwest. He had liked her extremely, in a town where it would have been ridiculous to be difficult to please. But his sense of this fact was somehow connected with Southwestern conditions; his liking for Nancy Beck was an emotion of which the proper setting was a back piazza. She presented herself here on a new basis—she appeared to desire to be classified afresh. Littlemore said to himself that this was too much trouble; he had taken her in that way—he could n't begin at this time of day to take her in another way. He asked himself whether she were going to be a bore. It was not easy to suppose Mrs. Headway capable of this offence; but she might become tiresome if she were bent upon being different. It made him rather afraid when she began to talk about European society, about his sister, about things being vulgar. Littlemore was a very good fellow, and he had at least the average human love of justice; but there was in his composition an element of the indolent, the sceptical, perhaps even the brutal, which made him desire to preserve the simplicity of their former terms of intercourse. He had no particular desire to see a woman rise again, as the mystic process was called; he did n't believe in wo-

men's rising again. He believed in their not going down; thought it perfectly possible and eminently desirable, but held it was much better for society that they should not endeavor, as the French say, to *mêler les genres*. In general, he did n't pretend to say what was good for society — society seemed to him in rather a bad way; but he had a conviction on this particular point. Nancy Beck going in for the great prizes, that spectacle might be entertaining for a simple spectator; but it would be a nuisance, an embarrassment, from the moment anything more than contemplation should be expected of him. He had no wish to be rough, but it might be well to show her that he was not to be humbugged.

"Oh, if there's anything you want you'll have it," he said in answer to her last remark. "You have always had what you want."

"Well, I want something new this time. Does your sister reside in London?"

"My dear lady, what do you know about my sister?" Littlemore asked. "She's not a woman you would care for."

Mrs. Headway was silent a moment. "You don't respect me!" she exclaimed suddenly in a loud, almost gay tone of voice. If Littlemore wished, as I say, to preserve the simplicity of their old terms of intercourse, she was apparently willing to humor him.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Beck . . . !" he cried, vaguely, protestingly, and using her former name quite by

accident. At San Diego he had never thought whether he respected her or not; that never came up.

"That's a proof of it — calling me by that hateful name! Don't you believe I'm married? I have n't been fortunate in my names," she added, pensively.

"You make it very awkward when you say such mad things. My sister lives most of the year in the country; she is very simple, rather dull, perhaps a trifle narrow-minded. You are very clever, very lively, and as wide as all creation. That's why I think you would n't like her."

"You ought to be ashamed to run down your sister!" cried Mrs. Headway. "You told me once — at San Diego — that she was the nicest woman you knew. I made a note of that, you see. And you told me she was just my age. So that makes it rather uncomfortable for you, if you won't introduce me!" And Littlemore's hostess gave a pitiless laugh. "I'm not in the least afraid of her being dull. It's very distinguished to be dull. I'm ever so much too lively."

"You are indeed, ever so much! But nothing is more easy than to know my sister," said Littlemore, who knew perfectly that what he said was untrue. And then, as a diversion from this delicate topic, he suddenly asked, "Are you going to marry Sir Arthur?"

"Don't you think I've been married about enough?"

“Possibly; but this is a new line, it would be different. An Englishman — that’s a new sensation.”

“If I should marry, it would be a European,” said Mrs. Headway calmly.

“Your chance is very good; they are all marrying Americans.”

“He would have to be some one fine, the man I should marry now. I have a good deal to make up for! That’s what I want to know about Sir Arthur; all this time you have n’t told me.”

“I have nothing in the world to tell — I have never heard of him. Has n’t he told you himself?”

“Nothing at all; he is very modest. He does n’t brag, nor make himself out anything great. That’s what I like him for: I think it’s in such good taste. I like good taste!” exclaimed Mrs. Headway. “But all this time,” she added, “you have n’t told me you would help me.”

“How can I help you? I’m no one, I have no power.”

“You can help me by not preventing me. I want you to promise not to prevent me.” She gave him her fixed, bright gaze again; her eyes seemed to look far into his.

“Good Lord, how could I prevent you?”

“I’m not sure that you could. But you might try.”

“I’m too indolent, and too stupid,” said Littlemore jocosely.

"Yes," she replied, musing as she still looked at him. "I think you are too stupid. But I think you are also too kind," she added more graciously. She was almost irresistible when she said such a thing as that.

They talked for a quarter of an hour longer, and at last — as if she had had scruples — she spoke to him of his own marriage, of the death of his wife, matters to which she alluded more felicitously (as he thought) than to some other points. "If you have a little girl you ought to be very happy; that's what I should like to have. Lord, I should make her a nice woman! Not like me — in another style!" When he rose to leave her, she told him that he must come and see her very often; she was to be some weeks longer in Paris; he must bring Mr. Waterville.

"Your English friend won't like that — our coming very often," Littlemore said, as he stood with his hand on the door.

"I don't know what he has got to do with it," she answered, staring.

"Neither do I. Only he must be in love with you."

"That does n't give him any right. Mercy, if I had had to put myself out for all the men that have been in love with me!"

"Of course you would have had a terrible life! Even doing as you please, you have had rather an agitated one. But your young Englishman's sentiments appear to give him the right to sit there, after

one comes in, looking blighted and bored. That might become very tiresome."

"The moment he becomes tiresome I send him away. You can trust me for that."

"Oh," said Littlemore, "it does n't matter, after all." He remembered that it would be very inconvenient to him to have undisturbed possession of Mrs. Headway.

She came out with him into the antechamber. Mr. Max, the courier, was fortunately not there. She lingered a little; she appeared to have more to say.

"On the contrary, he likes you to come," she remarked in a moment; "he wants to study my friends."

"To study them?"

"He wants to find out about me, and he thinks they may tell him something. Some day he will ask you right out, 'What sort of a woman is she, any way?'"

"Has n't he found out yet?"

"He does n't understand me," said Mrs. Headway, surveying the front of her dress. "He has never seen any one like me."

"I should imagine not!"

"So he will ask you, as I say."

"I will tell him you are the most charming woman in Europe."

"That ain't a description! Besides, he knows it. He wants to know if I'm respectable."

"He's very curious!" Littlemore cried, with a laugh.

She grew a little pale; she seemed to be watching his lips. "Mind you tell him," she went on with a smile that brought none of her color back.

"Respectable? I'll tell him you're adorable!"

Mrs. Headway stood a moment longer. "Ah, you're no use!" she murmured. And she suddenly turned away and passed back into her sitting-room, slowly drawing her far-trailing skirts.

III.

"*Elle ne se doute de rien!*" Littlemore said to himself as he walked away from the hotel; and he repeated the phrase in talking about her to Waterville. "She wants to be right," he added; "but she will never really succeed; she has begun too late, she will never be more than half-right. However, she won't know when she's wrong, so it does n't signify!" And then he proceeded to assert that in some respects she would remain incurable; she had no delicacy; no discretion, no shading; she was a woman who suddenly said to you, "You don't respect me!" As if that were a thing for a woman to say!

"It depends upon what she meant by it." Waterville liked to see the meanings of things.

"The more she meant by it the less she ought to say it!" Littlemore declared.

But he returned to the Hôtel Meurice, and on the next occasion he took Waterville with him. The Secretary of Legation, who had not often been in close quarters with a lady of this ambiguous quality, was prepared to regard Mrs. Headway as a very curious type. He was afraid she might be dangerous ; but, on the whole, he felt secure. The object of his devotion at present was his country, or at least the Department of State ; he had no intention of being diverted from that allegiance. Besides, he had his ideal of the attractive woman — a person pitched in a very much lower key than this shining, smiling, rustling, chattering daughter of the Territories. The woman he should care for would have repose, a certain love of privacy — she would sometimes let one alone. Mrs. Headway was personal, familiar, intimate ; she was always appealing or accusing, demanding explanations and pledges, saying things one had to answer. All this was accompanied with a hundred smiles and radiations and other natural graces, but the general effect of it was slightly fatiguing. She had certainly a great deal of charm, an immense desire to please, and a wonderful collection of dresses and trinkets ; but she was eager and preoccupied, and it was impossible that other people should share her eagerness. If she wished to get into society, there was no reason why her bachelor visitors should wish to see her there ; for it was the absence of the usual social incumbrances which made her drawing-room attractive. There was no doubt whatever that she was several women in one,

and she ought to content herself with that sort of numerical triumph. Littlemore said to Waterville that it was stupid of her to wish to scale the heights ; she ought to know how much more she was in her place down below. She appeared vaguely to irritate him ; even her fluttering attempts at self-culture — she had become a great critic, and handled many of the productions of the age with a bold, free touch — constituted a vague invocation, an appeal for sympathy which was naturally annoying to a man who disliked the trouble of revising old decisions, consecrated by a certain amount of reminiscence that might be called tender. She had, however, one palpable charm ; she was full of surprises. Even Waterville was obliged to confess that an element of the unexpected was not to be excluded from his conception of the woman who should have an ideal repose. Of course there were two kinds of surprises, and only one of them was thoroughly pleasant, though Mrs. Headway dealt impartially in both. She had the sudden delights, the odd exclamations, the queer curiosities of a person who has grown up in a country where everything is new and many things ugly, and who, with a natural turn for the arts and amenities of life, makes a tardy acquaintance with some of the finer usages, the higher pleasures. She was provincial — it was easy to see that she was provincial ; that took no great cleverness. But what was Parisian enough — if to be Parisian was the measure of success — was the way she picked up ideas and took a hint from every circumstance. “ Only

give me time, and I shall know all I have need of," she said to Littlemore, who watched her progress with a mixture of admiration and sadness. She delighted to speak of herself as a poor little barbarian who was trying to pick up a few crumbs of knowledge, and this habit took great effect from her delicate face, her perfect dress, and the brilliancy of her manners.

One of her surprises was that after that first visit she said no more to Littlemore about Mrs. Dolphin. He did her perhaps the grossest injustice ; but he had quite expected her to bring up this lady whenever they met. "If she will only leave Agnes alone, she may do what she will," he said to Waterville, expressing his relief. "My sister would never look at her, and it would be very awkward to have to tell her so." She expected assistance ; she made him feel that simply by the way she looked at him ; but for the moment she demanded no definite service. She held her tongue, but she waited, and her patience itself was a kind of admonition. In the way of society, it must be confessed, her privileges were meagre, Sir Arthur Demesne and her two compatriots being, so far as the latter could discover, her only visitors. She might have had other friends, but she held her head very high, and liked better to see no one than not to see the best company. It was evident that she flattered herself that she produced the effect of being, not neglected, but fastidious. There were plenty of Americans in Paris, but in this direction she failed to extend her acquaintance ; the nice people would n't

come and see her, and nothing would have induced her to receive the others. She had the most exact conception of the people she wished to see and to avoid. Littlemore expected every day that she would ask him why he did n't bring some of his friends, and he had his answer ready. It was a very poor one, for it consisted simply of a conventional assurance that he wished to keep her for himself. She would be sure to retort that this was very "thin," as, indeed, it was; but the days went by without her calling him to account. The little American colony in Paris is rich in amiable women, but there were none to whom Littlemore could make up his mind to say that it would be a favor to him to call on Mrs. Headway. He should n't like them the better for doing so, and he wished to like those of whom he might ask a favor. Except, therefore, that he occasionally spoke of her as a little Western woman, very pretty and rather queer, who had formerly been a great chum of his, she remained unknown in the *salons* of the Avenue Gabriel and the streets that encircle the Arch of Triumph. To ask the men to go and see her, without asking the ladies, would only accentuate the fact that he did n't ask the ladies; so he asked no one at all. Besides, it was true — just a little — that he wished to keep her to himself, and he was fatuous enough to believe that she cared much more for him than for her Englishman. Of course, however, he would never dream of marrying her, whereas the Englishman apparently was immersed in that vision. She hated



her past ; she used to announce that very often, talking of it as if it were an appendage of the same order as a dishonest courier, or even an inconvenient protrusion of drapery. Therefore, as Littlemore was part of her past, it might have been supposed that she would hate him too, and wish to banish him, with all the images he recalled, from her sight. But she made an exception in his favor, and if she disliked their old relations as a chapter of her own history, she seemed still to like them as a chapter of his. He felt that she clung to him, that she believed he could help her and in the long run would. It was to the long run that she appeared little by little to have attuned herself.

She succeeded perfectly in maintaining harmony between Sir Arthur Demesne and her American visitors, who spent much less time in her drawing-room. She had easily persuaded him that there were no grounds for jealousy, and that they had no wish, as she said, to crowd him out ; for it was ridiculous to be jealous of two persons at once, and Rupert Waterville, after he had learned the way to her hospitable apartment, appeared there as often as his friend Littlemore. The two, indeed, usually came together, and they ended by relieving their competitor of a certain sense of responsibility. This amiable and excellent but somewhat limited and slightly pretentious young man, who had not yet made up his mind, was sometimes rather oppressed with the magnitude of his undertaking, and when he was alone

with Mrs. Headway the tension of his thoughts occasionally became quite painful. He was very slim and straight, and looked taller than his height ; he had the prettiest, silkiest hair, which waved away from a large white forehead, and he was endowed with a nose of the so-called Roman model. He looked younger than his years (in spite of those last two attributes), partly on account of the delicacy of his complexion and the almost childlike candor of his round blue eye. He was diffident and self-conscious ; there were certain letters he could not pronounce. At the same time he had the manners of a young man who had been brought up to fill a considerable place in the world, with whom a certain correctness had become a habit, and who, though he might occasionally be a little awkward about small things, would be sure to acquit himself honorably in great ones. He was very simple, and he believed himself very serious ; he had the blood of a score of Warwickshire squires in his veins ; mingled in the last instance with the somewhat paler fluid which animated the long-necked daughter of a banker who had expected an earl for his son-in-law, but who had consented to regard Sir Baldwin Demesne as the least insufficient of baronets. The boy, the only one, had come into his title at five years of age ; his mother, who disappointed her auriferous sire a second time when poor Sir Baldwin broke his neck in the hunting field, watched over him with a tenderness that burned as steadily as a candle shaded by

a transparent hand. She never admitted, even to herself, that he was not the cleverest of men ; but it took all her own cleverness, which was much greater than his, to maintain this appearance. Fortunately he was not wild, so that he would never marry an actress or a governess, like two or three of the young men who had been at Eton with him. With this ground of nervousness the less, Lady Demesne awaited with an air of confidence his promotion to some high office. He represented in Parliament the Conservative instincts and vote of a red-roofed market town, and sent regularly to his bookseller for all the new publications on economical subjects, for he was determined that his political attitude should have a firm statistical basis. He was not conceited ; he was only misinformed — misinformed, I mean, about himself. He thought himself indispensable in the scheme of things — not as an individual, but as an institution. This conviction, however, was too sacred to betray itself by vulgar assumptions. If he was a little man in a big place, he never strutted nor talked loud ; he merely felt it as a kind of luxury that he had a large social circumference. It was like sleeping in a big bed ; one did n't toss about the more, but one felt a greater freshness.

He had never seen anything like Mrs. Headway ; he hardly knew by what standard to measure her. She was not like an English lady — not like those at least with whom he had been accustomed to converse ; and yet it was impossible not to see that she had a

standard of her own. He suspected that she was provincial, but as he was very much under the charm he compromised matters by saying to himself that she was only foreign. It was of course provincial to be foreign ; but this was, after all, a peculiarity which she shared with a great many nice people. He was not wild, and his mother had flattered herself that in this all-important matter he would not be perverse ; but it was all the same most unexpected that he should have taken a fancy to an American widow, five years older than himself, who knew no one and who sometimes did n't appear to understand exactly who he was. Though he disapproved of it, it was precisely her foreignness that pleased him ; she seemed to be as little as possible of his own race and creed ; there was not a touch of Warwickshire in her composition. She was like an Hungarian or a Pole, with the difference that he could almost understand her language. The unfortunate young man was fascinated, though he had not yet admitted to himself that he was in love. He would be very slow and deliberate in such a position, for he was deeply conscious of its importance. He was a young man who had arranged his life ; he had determined to marry at thirty-two. A long line of ancestors was watching him ; he hardly knew what they would think of Mrs. Headway. He hardly knew what he thought himself ; the only thing he was absolutely sure of was that she made the time pass as it passed in no other pursuit. He was vaguely uneasy ; he was by no

means sure it was right the time should pass like that. There was nothing to show for it but the fragments of Mrs. Headway's conversation, the peculiarities of her accent, the sallies of her wit, the audacities of her fancy, her mysterious allusions to her past. Of course he knew that she had a past; she was not a young girl, she was a widow — and widows are essentially an expression of an accomplished fact. He was not jealous of her antecedents, but he wished to understand them, and it was here that the difficulty occurred. The subject was illumined with fitful flashes, but it never placed itself before him as a general picture. He asked her a good many questions, but her answers were so startling that, like sudden luminous points, they seemed to intensify the darkness round their edges. She had apparently spent her life in an inferior province of an inferior country; but it didn't follow from this that she herself had been low. She had been a lily among thistles; and there was something romantic in a man in his position taking an interest in such a woman. It pleased Sir Arthur to believe he was romantic; that had been the case with several of his ancestors, who supplied a precedent without which he would perhaps not have ventured to trust himself. He was the victim of perplexities from which a single spark of direct perception would have saved him. He took everything in the literal sense; he had not a grain of humor. He sat there vaguely waiting for something to happen, and not committing himself by rash declarations. If

he was in love, it was in his own way, reflectively, inexpressively, obstinately. He was waiting for the formula which would justify his conduct and Mrs. Headway's peculiarities. He hardly knew where it would come from ; you might have thought from his manner that he would discover it in one of the elaborate *entrées* that were served to the pair when Mrs. Headway consented to dine with him at Bignon's or the Café Anglais ; or in one of the numerous band-boxes that arrived from the Rue de la Paix, and from which she often lifted the lid in the presence of her admirer. There were moments when he got weary of waiting in vain, and at these moments the arrival of her American friends (he often wondered that she had so few), seemed to lift the mystery from his shoulders and give him a chance to rest. This formula — she herself was not yet able to give it, for she was not aware how much ground it was expected to cover. She talked about her past, because she thought it the best thing to do ; she had a shrewd conviction that it was better to make a good use of it than to attempt to efface it. To efface it was impossible, though that was what she would have preferred. She had no objection to telling fibs, but now that she was taking a new departure, she wished to tell only those that were necessary. She would have been delighted if it had been possible to tell none at all. A few, however, were indispensable, and we need not attempt to estimate more closely the ingenious re-arrangements of fact with which she entertained and

mystified Sir Arthur. She knew of course that as a product of fashionable circles she was nowhere, but she might have great success as a child of nature.

IV.

RUPERT WATERVILLE, in the midst of intercourse in which every one perhaps had a good many mental reservations, never forgot that he was in a representative position, that he was responsible, official ; and he asked himself more than once how far it was permitted to him to countenance Mrs. Headway's pretensions to being an American lady typical even of the newer phases. In his own way he was as puzzled as poor Sir Arthur, and indeed he flattered himself that he was as particular as any Englishman could be. Suppose that after all this free association Mrs. Headway should come over to London and ask at the Legation to be presented to the Queen ? It would be so awkward to refuse her — of course they would have to refuse her — that he was very careful about making tacit promises. She might construe anything as a tacit promise — he knew how the smallest gestures of diplomatists were studied and interpreted. It was his effort therefore to be really the diplomatist in his relations with this attractive but dangerous woman. The party of four used often to dine together — Sir Arthur pushed his confidence so far — and on these occasions Mrs. Headway, availing

herself of one of the privileges of a lady, even at the most expensive restaurant — used to wipe her glasses with her napkin. One evening, when after polishing a goblet she held it up to the light, giving it, with her head on one side, the least glimmer of a wink, he said to himself as he watched her that she looked like a modern bacchante. He noticed at this moment that the baronet was gazing at her too, and he wondered if the same idea had come to him. He often wondered what the baronet thought; he had devoted first and last a good deal of speculation to the baronial class. Littlemore, alone, at this moment, was not observing Mrs. Headway; he never appeared to observe her, though she often observed him. Waterville asked himself among other things why Sir Arthur had not brought his own friends to see her, for Paris during the several weeks that now elapsed was rich in English visitors. He wondered whether she had asked him and he had refused; he would have liked very much to know whether she had asked him. He explained his curiosity to Littlemore, who, however, took very little interest in it. Littlemore said, nevertheless, that he had no doubt she had asked him; she never would be deterred by false delicacy.

“She has been very delicate with you,” Waterville replied. “She has n’t been at all pressing of late.”

“It is only because she has given me up; she thinks I’m a brute.”

"I wonder what she thinks of me," Waterville said, pensively.

"Oh, she counts upon you to introduce her to the Minister. It's lucky for you that our representative here is absent."

"Well," Waterville rejoined, "the Minister has settled two or three difficult questions, and I suppose he can settle this one. I shall do nothing but by the orders of my chief." He was very fond of talking about his chief.

"She does me injustice," Littlemore added in a moment. "I have spoken to several people about her."

"Ah; but what have you told them?"

"That she lives at the Hôtel Meurice; and that she wants to know nice people."

"They are flattered, I suppose, at your thinking them nice, but they don't go," said Waterville.

"I spoke of her to Mrs. Bagshaw, and Mrs. Bagshaw has promised to go."

"Ah," Waterville murmured; "you don't call Mrs. Bagshaw nice? Mrs. Headway won't see her."

"That's exactly what she wants, — to be able to cut some one!"

Waterville had a theory that Sir Arthur was keeping Mrs. Headway as a surprise — he meant perhaps to produce her during the next London season. He presently, however, learned as much about the matter as he could have desired to know. He had once

offered to accompany his beautiful compatriot to the Museum of the Luxembourg and tell her a little about the modern French school. She had not examined this collection, in spite of her determination to see everything remarkable (she carried her *Murray* in her lap even when she went to see the great tailor in the Rue de la Paix, to whom, as she said, she had given no end of points); for she usually went to such places with Sir Arthur, and Sir Arthur was indifferent to the modern painters of France. "He says there are much better men in England. I must wait for the Royal Academy, next year. He seems to think one can wait for anything, but I'm not so good at waiting as he. I can't afford to wait — I've waited long enough." So much as this Mrs. Headway said on the occasion of her arranging with Rupert Waterville that they should some day visit the Luxembourg together. She alluded to the Englishman as if he were her husband or her brother, her natural protector and companion.

"I wonder if she knows how that sounds?" Waterville said to himself. "I don't believe she would do it if she knew how it sounds." And he made the further reflection that when one arrived from San Diego there was no end to the things one had to learn: it took so many things to make a well-bred woman. Clever as she was, Mrs. Headway was right in saying that she couldn't afford to wait. She must learn quickly. She wrote to Waterville one day to propose that they should go to the Museum

on the morrow ; Sir Arthur's mother was in Paris, on her way to Cannes, where she was to spend the winter. She was only passing through, but she would be there three days and he would naturally give himself up to her. She appeared to have the properest ideas as to what a gentleman would propose to do for his mother. She herself, therefore, would be free, and she named the hour at which she should expect him to call for her. He was punctual to the appointment, and they drove across the river in the large high-hung barouche in which she constantly rolled about Paris. With Mr. Max on the box — the courier was ornamented with enormous whiskers — this vehicle had an appearance of great respectability, though Sir Arthur assured her — she repeated this to her other friends — that in London, next year, they would do the thing much better for her. It struck her other friends of course that the baronet was prepared to be very consistent, and this on the whole was what Waterville would have expected of him. Littlemore simply remarked that at San Diego she drove herself about in a rickety buggy, with muddy wheels, and with a mule very often in the shafts. Waterville felt something like excitement as he asked himself whether the baronet's mother would now consent to know her. She must of course be aware that it was a woman who was keeping her son in Paris at a season when English gentlemen were most naturally employed in shooting partridges.

“She is staying at the Hôtel du Rhin, and I have

made him feel that he must n't leave her while she is heré," Mrs. Headway said, as they drove up the narrow Rue de Seine. "Her name is Lady Demesne, but her full title is the Honorable Lady Demesne, as she's a Baron's daughter. Her father used to be a banker, but he did something or other for the Government — the Tories, you know, they call them — and so he was raised to the peerage. So you see one *can* be raised! She has a lady with her as a companion." Waterville's neighbor gave him this information with a seriousness that made him smile; he wondered whether she thought he did n't know how a Baron's daughter was addressed. In that she was very provincial; she had a way of exaggerating the value of her intellectual acquisitions and of assuming that others had been as ignorant as she. He noted, too, that she had ended by suppressing poor Sir Arthur's name altogether, and designating him only by a sort of conjugal pronoun. She had been so much, and so easily, married, that she was full of these misleading references to gentlemen.

V.

THEY walked through the gallery of the Luxembourg, and except that Mrs. Headway looked at everything at once and at nothing long enough, talked, as usual, rather too loud, and bestowed too much attention on the bad copies that were being

made of several indifferent pictures, she was a very agreeable companion and a grateful recipient of knowledge. She was very quick to understand, and Waterville was sure that before she left the gallery she knew something about the French school. She was quite prepared to compare it critically with London exhibitions of the following year. As Littlemore and he had remarked more than once, she was a very odd mixture. Her conversation, her personality, were full of little joints and seams, all of them very visible, where the old and the new had been pieced together. When they had passed through the different rooms of the palace Mrs. Headway proposed that instead of returning directly they should take a stroll in the adjoining gardens, which she wished very much to see and was sure she should like. She had quite seized the difference between the old Paris and the new, and felt the force of the romantic associations of the Latin quarter as perfectly as if she had enjoyed all the benefits of modern culture. The autumn sun was warm in the alleys and terraces of the Luxembourg ; the masses of foliage above them, clipped and squared, rusty with ruddy patches, shed a thick lace-work over the white sky, which was streaked with the palest blue. The beds of flowers near the palace were of the vividest yellow and red, and the sunlight rested on the smooth gray walls of those parts of its basement that looked south ; in front of which, on the long green benches, a row of brown-cheeked nurses, in white caps and white aprons, sat offering

nutrition to as many bundles of white drapery. There were other white caps wandering in the broad paths, attended by little brown French children; the small, straw-seated chairs were piled and stacked in some places and disseminated in others. An old lady in black, with white hair fastened over each of her temples by a large black comb, sat on the edge of a stone bench (too high for her delicate length), motionless, staring straight before her and holding a large door-key; under a tree a priest was reading—you could see his lips move at a distance; a young soldier, dwarfish and red-legged, strolled past with his hands in his pockets, which were very much distended. Waterville sat down with Mrs. Headway on the straw-bottomed chairs, and she presently said, "I like this; it's even better than the pictures in the gallery. It's more of a picture."

"Everything in France is a picture—even things that are ugly," Waterville replied. "Everything makes a subject."

"Well, I like France!" Mrs. Headway went on, with a little incongruous sigh. Then, suddenly, from an impulse even more inconsequent than her sigh, she added, "He asked me to go and see her, but I told him I would n't. She may come and see me if she likes." This was so abrupt that Waterville was slightly confounded; but he speedily perceived that she had returned by a short cut to Sir Arthur Domesne and his honorable mother. Waterville liked to know about other people's affairs, but he did not

like this taste to be imputed to him ; and therefore, though he was curious to see how the old lady, as he called her, would treat his companion, he was rather displeased with the latter for being so confidential. He had never imagined he was so intimate with her as that. Mrs. Headway, however, had a manner of taking intimacy for granted ; a manner which Sir Arthur's mother at least would be sure not to like. He pretended to wonder a little what she was talking about, but she scarcely explained. She only went on, through untraceable transitions : "The least she can do is to come. I have been very kind to her son. That's not a reason for my going to her — it's a reason for her coming to me. Besides, if she does n't like what I've done, she can leave me alone. I want to get into European society, but I want to get in in my own way. I don't want to run after people ; I want them to run after me. I guess they will, some day !" Waterville listened to this with his eyes on the ground ; he felt himself blushing a little. There was something in Mrs. Headway that shocked and mortified him, and Littlemore had been right in saying that she had a deficiency of shading. She was terribly distinct ; her motives, her impulses, her desires were absolutely glaring. She needed to see, to hear, her own thoughts. Vehement thought, with Mrs. Headway, was inevitably speech, though speech was not always thought, and now she had suddenly become vehement. "If she does once come — then, ah, then, I shall be too perfect with her ; I sha'n't let

her go ! But she must take the first step. I confess, I hope she 'll be nice."

"Perhaps she won't," said Waterville perversely.

"Well, I don't care if she is n't. He has never told me anything about her ; never a word about any of his own belongings. If I wished, I might believe he 's ashamed of them."

"I don't think it's that."

"I know it is n't. I know what it is. It's just modesty. He does n't want to brag — he's too much of a gentleman. He does n't want to dazzle me — he wants me to like him for himself. Well, I do like him," she added in a moment. "But I shall like him still better if he brings his mother. They shall know that in America."

"Do you think it will make an impression in America ?" Waterville asked, smiling.

"It will show them that I am visited by the British aristocracy. They won't like that."

"Surely they grudge you no innocent pleasure," Waterville murmured, smiling still.

"They grudged me common politeness — when I was in New York ! Did you ever hear how they treated me, when I came on from the West ?"

Waterville stared ; this episode was quite new to him. His companion had turned towards him ; her pretty head was tossed back like a flower in the wind ; there was a flush in her cheek, a sharper light in her eye. "Ah ! my dear New Yorkers, they're incapable of rudeness !" cried the young man.

"You're one of them, I see. But I don't speak of the men. The men were well enough — though they did allow it."

"Allow what, Mrs. Headway?" Waterville was quite in the dark.

She would n't answer at once; her eyes, glittering a little, were fixed upon absent images. "What did you hear about me over there? Don't pretend you heard nothing."

He had heard nothing at all; there had not been a word about Mrs. Headway in New York. He could n't pretend, and he was obliged to tell her this. "But I have been away," he added, "and in America I did n't go out. There's nothing to go out for in New York — only little boys and girls."

"There are plenty of old women! They decided I was improper. I'm very well known in the West — I'm known from Chicago to San Francisco — if not personally (in all cases), at least by reputation. People can tell you out there. In New York they decided I was n't good enough. Not good enough for New York! What do you say to that?" And she gave a sweet little laugh. Whether she had struggled with her pride before making this avowal, Waterville never knew. The crudity of the avowal seemed to indicate that she had no pride, and yet there was a spot in her heart which, as he now perceived, was intensely sore and had suddenly begun to throb. "I took a house for the winter — one of the handsomest houses in the place — but I sat

there all alone. They did n't think me proper. Such as you see me here, I was n't a success! I tell you the truth, at whatever cost. Not a decent woman came to see me!"

Waterville was embarrassed; diplomatist as he was, he hardly knew what line to take. He could not see what need there was of her telling him the truth. though the incident appeared to have been most curious, and he was glad to know the facts on the best authority. It was the first he knew of this remarkable woman's having spent a winter in his native city — which was virtually a proof of her having come and gone in complete obscurity. It was vain for him to pretend that he had been a good deal away, for he had been appointed to his post in London only six months before, and Mrs. Headway's social failure preceded that event. In the midst of these reflections he had an inspiration. He attempted neither to explain, to minimize, nor to apologize; he ventured simply to lay his hand for an instant on her own and to exclaim, as tenderly as possible, "I wish *I* had known you were there!"

"I had plenty of men — but men don't count. If they are not a positive help, they're a hinderance, and the more you have, the worse it looks. The women simply turned their backs."

"They were afraid of you — they were jealous," Waterville said.

"It's very good of you to try and explain it away; all I know is, not one of them crossed my threshold.

You need n't try and tone it down ; I know perfectly how the case stands. In New York, if you please, I was a failure !”

“So much the worse for New York !” cried Waterville, who, as he afterwards said to Littlemore, had got quite worked up.

“And now you know why I want to get into society over here ?” She jumped up and stood before him ; with a dry, hard smile she looked down at him. Her smile itself was an answer to her question ; it expressed an urgent desire for revenge. There was an abruptness in her movements which left Waterville quite behind ; but as he still sat there, returning her glance, he felt that he at last, in the light of that smile, the flash of that almost fierce question, understood Mrs. Headway.

She turned away, to walk to the gate of the garden, and he went with her, laughing vaguely, uneasily, at her tragic tone. Of course she expected him to help her to her revenge ; but his female relations, his mother and his sisters, his innumerable cousins, had been a party to the slight she suffered, and he reflected as he walked along that after all they had been right. They had been right in not going to see a woman who could chatter that way about her social wrongs ; whether Mrs. Headway were respectable or not, they had a correct instinct, for at any rate she was vulgar. European society might let her in, but European society would be wrong. New York, Waterville said to himself with a glow of civic pride, was quite

capable of taking a higher stand in such a matter than London. They went some distance without speaking ; at last he said, expressing honestly the thought which at that moment was uppermost in his mind, "I hate that phrase, 'getting into society.' I don't think one ought to attribute to one's self that sort of ambition. One ought to assume that one is in society — that one *is* society — and to hold that if one has good manners, one has, from the social point of view, achieved the great thing. The rest regards others."

For a moment she appeared not to understand ; then she broke out : "Well, I suppose I have n't good manners ; at any rate, I'm not satisfied ! Of course, I don't talk right — I know that very well. But let me get where I want to first — then I'll look after my expressions. If I once get there, I shall be perfect !" she cried with a tremor of passion. They reached the gate of the garden and stood a moment outside, opposite to the low arcade of the Odéon, lined with bookstalls at which Waterville cast a slightly wistful glance, waiting for Mrs. Headway's carriage, which had drawn up at a short distance. The whiskered Max had seated himself within, and on the tense, elastic cushions had fallen into a doze. The carriage got into motion without his awaking ; he came to his senses only as it stopped again. He started up, staring ; then, without confusion, he proceeded to descend.

"I have learned it in Italy — they say the *siesta*,"

he remarked with an agreeable smile, holding the door open to Mrs. Headway.

“Well, I should think you had!” this lady replied, laughing amicably as she got into the vehicle, whither Waterville followed her. It was not a surprise to him to perceive that she spoiled her courier; she naturally would spoil her courier. But civilization begins at home, said Waterville; and the incident threw an ironical light upon her desire to get into society. It failed, however, to divert her thoughts from the subject she was discussing with Waterville, for as Max ascended the box and the carriage went on its way, she threw out another little note of defiance. “If once I’m all right over here, I can snap my fingers at New York! You’ll see the faces those women will make.”

Waterville was sure his mother and sisters would make no faces; but he felt afresh, as the carriage rolled back to the Hôtel Meurice, that now he understood Mrs. Headway. As they were about to enter the court of the hotel a closed carriage passed before them, and while a few moments later he helped his companion to alight, he saw that Sir Arthur Demesne had descended from the other vehicle. Sir Arthur perceived Mrs. Headway, and instantly gave his hand to a lady seated in the *coupé*. This lady emerged with a certain slow impressiveness, and as she stood before the door of the hotel — a woman still young and fair, with a good deal of height, gentle, tranquil, plainly dressed, yet distinctly imposing — Waterville saw that

the baronet had brought his mother to call upon Nancy Beck. Mrs. Headway's triumph had begun; the Dowager Lady Demesne had taken the first step. Waterville wondered whether the ladies in New York, notified by some magnetic wave, were distorting their features. Mrs. Headway, quickly conscious of what had happened, was neither too prompt to appropriate the visit, nor too slow to acknowledge it. She just paused, smiling at Sir Arthur.

"I wish to introduce my mother — she wants very much to know you." He approached Mrs. Headway; the lady had taken his arm. She was at once simple and circumspect; she had all the resources of an English matron.

Mrs. Headway, without advancing a step, put out her hands as if to draw her visitor quickly closer. "I declare, you're too sweet!" Waterville heard her say.

He was turning away, as his own business was over; but the young Englishman, who had surrendered his mother to the embrace, as it might now almost be called, of their hostess, just checked him with a friendly gesture. "I daresay I sha'n't see you again—I'm going away."

"Good-by, then," said Waterville. "You return to England?"

"No; I go to Cannes with my mother."

"You remain at Cannes?"

"Till Christmas very likely."

The ladies, escorted by Mr. Max, had passed into the hotel, and Waterville presently quitted his inter-

locutor. He smiled as he walked away reflecting that this personage had obtained a concession from his mother only at the price of a concession.

The next morning he went to see Littlemore, from whom he had a standing invitation to breakfast, and who, as usual, was smoking a cigar and looking through a dozen newspapers. Littlemore had a large apartment and an accomplished cook; he got up late and wandered about his room all the morning, stopping from time to time to look out of his windows which overhung the Place de la Madeleine. They had not been seated many minutes at breakfast when Waterville announced that Mrs. Headway was about to be abandoned by Sir Arthur, who was going to Cannes.

"That's no news to me," Littlemore said. "He came last night to bid me good-by."

"To bid you good-by? He was very civil all of a sudden."

"He did n't come from civility—he came from curiosity. Having dined here, he had a pretext for calling."

"I hope his curiosity was satisfied," Waterville remarked, in the manner of a person who could enter into such a sentiment.

Littlemore hesitated. "Well, I suspect not. He sat here some time, but we talked about everything but what he wanted to know."

"And what did he want to know?"

"Whether I know anything against Nancy Beck."

Waterville stared. "Did he call her Nancy Beck?"

"We never mentioned her; but I saw what he wanted, and that he wanted me to lead up to her — only I would n't do it."

"Ah, poor man!" Waterville murmured.

"I don't see why you pity him," said Littlemore. "Mrs. Beck's admirers were never pitied."

"Well, of course he wants to marry her."

"Let him do it, then. I have nothing to say to it."

"He believes there's something in her past that's hard to swallow."

"Let him leave it alone, then."

"How can he, if he's in love with her?" Waterville asked, in the tone of a man who could enter into that sentiment too.

"Ah, my dear fellow, he must settle it himself. He has no right, at any rate, to ask me such a question. There was a moment, just as he was going, when he had it on his tongue's end. He stood there in the doorway, he could n't leave me — he was going to plump out with it. He looked at me straight, and I looked straight at him; we remained that way for almost a minute. Then he decided to hold his tongue, and took himself off."

Waterville listened to this little description with intense interest. "And if he had asked you, what would you have said?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, I suppose you would have said that his question was n't fair?"

"That would have been tantamount to admitting the worst."

"Yes," said Waterville, thoughtfully, "you could n't do that. On the other hand, if he had put it to you on your honor whether she were a woman to marry, it would have been very awkward."

"Awkward enough. Fortunately, he has no business to put things to me on my honor. Moreover, nothing has passed between us to give him the right to ask me questions about Mrs. Headway. As she is a great friend of mine, he can't pretend to expect me to give confidential information about her."

"You don't think she's a woman to marry, all the same," Waterville declared. "And if a man were to ask you that, you might knock him down, but it would n't be an answer."

"It would have to serve," said Littlemore. He added in a moment, "There are certain cases where it's a man's duty to commit perjury."

Waterville looked grave. "Certain cases?"

"Where a woman's honor is at stake."

"I see what you mean. That's of course if he has been himself concerned —"

"Himself or another. It does n't matter."

"I think it does matter. I don't like perjury," said Waterville. "It's a delicate question."

They were interrupted by the arrival of the servant with a second course, and Littlemore gave a

laugh as he helped himself. "It would be a joke to see her married to that superior being!"

"It would be a great responsibility."

"Responsibility or not, it would be very amusing."

"Do you mean to assist her, then?"

"Heaven forbid! But I mean to bet on her."

Waterville gave his companion a serious glance; he thought him strangely superficial. The situation, however, was difficult, and he laid down his fork with a little sigh.

PART II.

VI.

THE Easter holidays that year were unusually genial; mild, watery sunshine assisted the progress of the spring. The high, dense hedges, in Warwickshire, were like walls of hawthorn imbedded in banks of primrose, and the finest trees in England, springing out of them with a regularity which suggested conservative principles, began to cover themselves with a kind of green downiness. Rupert Waterville, devoted to his duties and faithful in attendance at the Legation, had had little time to enjoy that rural hospitality which is the great invention of the English people and the most perfect expression of their character. He had been invited now and then—for in London he commended himself to many people as a very sensible young man—but he had been obliged to decline more proposals than he accepted. It was still, therefore, rather a novelty to him to stay at one of those fine old houses, surrounded with hereditary acres, which from the first of his coming to England he had thought of with such curiosity and such envy. He proposed to himself

to see as many of them as possible, but he disliked to do things in a hurry, or when his mind was preoccupied, as it was so apt to be, with what he believed to be business of importance. He kept the country-houses in reserve; he would take them up in their order, after he should have got a little more used to London. Without hesitation, however, he had accepted the invitation to Longlands; it had come to him in a simple and familiar note, from Lady Demesne, with whom he had no acquaintance. He knew of her return from Cannes, where she had spent the whole winter, for he had seen it related in a Sunday newspaper; yet it was with a certain surprise that he heard from her in these informal terms. "Dear Mr. Waterville," she wrote, "my son tells me that you will perhaps be able to come down here on the 17th, to spend two or three days. If you can, it will give us much pleasure. We can promise you the society of your charming country-woman, Mrs. Headway."

He had seen Mrs. Headway; she had written to him a fortnight before from an hotel in Cork Street, to say that she had arrived in London for the season and should be very glad to see him. He had gone to see her, trembling with the fear that she would break ground about her presentation; but he was agreeably surprised to observe that she neglected this topic. She had spent the winter in Rome, travelling directly from that city to England, with just a little stop in Paris, to buy a few clothes. She

had taken much satisfaction in Rome, where she made many friends; she assured him that she knew half the Roman nobility. "They are charming people; they have only one fault, they stay too long," she said. And, in answer to his inquiring glance, "I mean when they come to see you," she explained. "They used to come every evening, and they wanted to stay till the next day. They were all princes and counts. I used to give them cigars, &c. I knew as many people as I wanted," she added, in a moment, discovering perhaps in Waterville's eye the traces of that sympathy with which six months before he had listened to her account of her discomfiture in New York. "There were lots of English; I knew all the English, and I mean to visit them here. The Americans waited to see what the English would do, so as to do the opposite. Thanks to that, I was spared some precious specimens. There are, you know, some fearful ones. Besides, in Rome, society does n't matter, if you have a feeling for the ruins and the Campagna; I had an immense feeling for the Campagna. I was always mooning round in some damp old temple. It reminded me a good deal of the country round San Diego—if it had n't been for the temples. I liked to think it all over, when I was driving round; I was always brooding over the past." At this moment, however, Mrs. Headway had dismissed the past; she was prepared to give herself up wholly to the actual. She wished Waterville to advise her as to how she should live—what she

should do. Should she stay at a hotel or should she take a house? She guessed she had better take a house, if she could find a nice one. Max wanted to look for one, and she didn't know but she'd let him; he got her such a nice one in Rome. She said nothing about Sir Arthur Demesne, who, it seemed to Waterville, would have been her natural guide and sponsor; he wondered whether her relations with the baronet had come to an end. Waterville had met him a couple of times since the opening of Parliament, and they had exchanged twenty words, none of which, however, had reference to Mrs. Headway. Waterville had been recalled to London just after the incident of which he was witness in the court of the Hôtel Meurice; and all he knew of its consequence was what he had learned from Littlemore, who, on his way back to America, where he had suddenly ascertained that there were reasons for his spending the winter, passed through the British capital. Littlemore had reported that Mrs. Headway was enchanted with Lady Demesne, and had no words to speak of her kindness and sweetness. "She told me she liked to know her son's friends, and I told her I liked to know my friends' mothers," Mrs. Headway had related. "I should be willing to be old if I could be like that," she had added, oblivious for the moment that she was at least as near to the age of the mother as to that of the son. The mother and son, at any rate, had retired to Cannes together, and at this moment Littlemore had received letters

from home which caused him to start for Arizona. Mrs. Headway had accordingly been left to her own devices, and he was afraid she had bored herself, though Mrs. Bagshaw had called upon her. In November she had travelled to Italy, not by way of Cannes.

"What do you suppose she'll do in Rome?" Waterville had asked; his imagination failing him here, for he had not yet trodden the Seven Hills.

"I haven't the least idea. And I don't care!" Littlemore added in a moment. Before he left London he mentioned to Waterville that Mrs. Headway, on his going to take leave of her in Paris, had made another, and a rather unexpected, attack. "About the society business—she said I must really do something—she could n't go on in that way. And she appealed to me in the name—I don't think I quite know how to say it."

"I should be very glad if you would try," said Waterville, who was constantly reminding himself that Americans in Europe were, after all, in a manner, to a man in his position, as the sheep to the shepherd.

"Well, in the name of the affection that we had formerly entertained for each other."

"The affection?"

"So she was good enough to call it. But I deny it all. If one had to have an affection for every woman one used to sit up 'evenings' with—!" And Littlemore paused, not defining the result of such an

obligation. Waterville tried to imagine what it would be ; while his friend embarked for New York, without telling him how, after all, he had resisted Mrs. Headway's attack.

At Christmas, Waterville knew of Sir Arthur's return to England, and believed that he also knew that the baronet had not gone down to Rome. He had a theory that Lady Demesne was a very clever woman — clever enough to make her son do what she preferred and yet also make him think it his own choice. She had been politic, accommodating, about going to see Mrs. Headway ; but, having seen her and judged her, she had determined to break the thing off. She had been sweet and kind, as Mrs. Headway said, because for the moment that was easiest ; but she had made her last visit on the same occasion as her first. She had been sweet and kind, but she had set her face as a stone, and if poor Mrs. Headway, arriving in London for the season, expected to find any vague promises redeemed, she would taste of the bitterness of shattered hopes. He had made up his mind that, shepherd as he was, and Mrs. Headway one of his sheep, it was none of his present duty to run about after her, especially as she could be trusted not to stray too far. He saw her a second time, and she still said nothing about Sir Arthur. Waterville, who always had a theory, said to himself that she was waiting, that the baronet had not turned up. She was also getting into a house ; the courier had found her in Chesterfield Street, Mayfair, a little

gem, which was to cost her what jewels cost. After all this, Waterville was greatly surprised at Lady Demesne's note, and he went down to Longlands with much the same impatience with which, in Paris, he would have gone, if he had been able, to the first night of a new comedy. It seemed to him that, through a sudden stroke of good fortune, he had received a *billet d'auteur*.

It was agreeable to him to arrive at an English country-house at the close of the day. He liked the drive from the station in the twilight, the sight of the fields and copses and cottages, vague and lonely in contrast to his definite, lighted goal; the sound of the wheels on the long avenue, which turned and wound repeatedly without bringing him to what he reached however at last — the wide, gray front, with a glow in its scattered windows and a sweep of still firmer gravel up to the door. The front at Longlands, which was of this sober complexion, had a grand, pompous air; it was attributed to the genius of Sir Christopher Wren. There were wings which came forward in a semicircle, with statues placed at intervals on the cornice; so that in the flattering dusk it looked like an Italian palace, erected through some magical evocation in an English park. Waterville had taken a late train, which left him but twenty minutes to dress for dinner. He prided himself considerably on the art of dressing both quickly and well; but this operation left him no time to inquire whether the apartment to which he had been assigned befitted

the dignity of a Secretary of Legation. On emerging from his room he found there was an ambassador in the house, and this discovery was a check to uneasy reflections. He tacitly assumed that he would have had a better room if it had not been for the ambassador, who was of course counted first. The large, brilliant house gave an impression of the last century and of foreign taste, of light colors, high, vaulted ceilings, with pale mythological frescos, gilded doors, surmounted by old French panels, faded tapestries and delicate damasks, stores of ancient china, among which great jars of pink roses were conspicuous. The people in the house had assembled for dinner in the principal hall, which was animated by a fire of great logs, and the company was so numerous that Waterville was afraid he was the last. Lady Demesne gave him a smile and a touch of her hand; she was very tranquil, and, saying nothing in particular, treated him as if he had been a constant visitor. Waterville was not sure whether he liked this or hated it; but these alternatives mattered equally little to his hostess, who looked at her guests as if to see whether the number were right. The master of the house was talking to a lady before the fire; when he caught sight of Waterville across the room, he waved him "how d'ye do," with an air of being delighted to see him. He had never had that air in Paris, and Waterville had a chance to observe, what he had often heard, to how much greater advantage the English appear in their country houses.

Lady Demesne turned to him again, with her sweet vague smile, which looked as if it were the same for everything.

"We are waiting for Mrs. Headway," she said.

"Ah, she has arrived?" Waterville had quite forgotten her.

"She came at half-past five. At six she went to dress. She has had two hours."

"Let us hope that the results will be proportionate," said Waterville, smiling.

"Oh, the results; I don't know," Lady Demesne murmured, without looking at him; and in these simple words Waterville saw the confirmation of his theory that she was playing a deep game. He wondered whether he should sit next to Mrs. Headway at dinner, and hoped, with due deference to this lady's charms, that he should have something more novel. The results of a toilet which she had protracted through two hours were presently visible. She appeared on the staircase which descended to the hall, and which, for three minutes, as she came down rather slowly, facing the people beneath, placed her in considerable relief. Waterville, as he looked at her, felt that this was a moment of importance for her: it was virtually her entrance into English society. Mrs. Headway entered English society very well, with her charming smile upon her lips and with the trophies of the Rue de la Paix trailing behind her. She made a portentous rustling as she moved. People turned their eyes toward her; there was soon

a perceptible diminution of talk, though talk had not been particularly audible. She looked very much alone, and it was rather pretentious of her to come down last, though it was possible that this was simply because, before her glass, she had been unable to please herself. For she evidently felt the importance of the occasion, and Waterville was sure that her heart was beating. She was very valiant, however; she smiled more intensely, and advanced like a woman who was used to being looked at. She had at any rate the support of knowing that she was pretty; for nothing on this occasion was wanting to her prettiness, and the determination to succeed, which might have made her hard, was veiled in the virtuous consciousness that she had neglected nothing. Lady Demesne went forward to meet her; Sir Arthur took no notice of her; and presently Waterville found himself proceeding to dinner with the wife of an ecclesiastic, to whom Lady Demesne had presented him for this purpose when the hall was almost empty. The rank of this ecclesiastic in the hierarchy he learned early on the morrow; but in the mean time it seemed to him strange, somehow, that in England ecclesiastics should have wives. English life, even at the end of a year, was full of those surprises. The lady, however, was very easily accounted for; she was in no sense a violent exception, and there had been no need of the Reformation to produce her. Her name was Mrs. April; she was wrapped in a large lace shawl; to eat her dinner she removed but

one glove, and the other gave Waterville at moments an odd impression that the whole repast, in spite of its great completeness, was something of the picnic order. Mrs. Headway was opposite, at a little distance; she had been taken in, as Waterville learned from his neighbor, by a general, a gentleman with a lean, aquiline face and a cultivated whisker, and she had on the other side a smart young man of an identity less definite. Poor Sir Arthur sat between two ladies much older than himself, whose names, redolent of history, Waterville had often heard, and had associated with figures more romantic. Mrs. Headway gave Waterville no greeting; she evidently had not seen him till they were seated at table, when she simply stared at him with a violence of surprise that for a moment almost effaced her smile. It was a copious and well-ordered banquet, but as Waterville looked up and down the table he wondered whether some of its elements might not be a little dull. As he made this reflection he became conscious that he was judging the affair much more from Mrs. Headway's point of view than from his own. He knew no one but Mrs. April, who, displaying an almost motherly desire to give him information, told him the names of many of their companions; in return for which he explained to her that he was not in that set. Mrs. Headway got on in perfection with her general; Waterville watched her more than he appeared to do, and saw that the general, who evidently was a cool hand, was drawing her out. Water-

ville hoped she would be careful. He was a man of fancy, in his way, and as he compared her with the rest of the company he said to himself that she was a very plucky little woman, and that her present undertaking had a touch of the heroic. She was alone against many, and her opponents were a very serried phalanx ; those who were there represented a thousand others. They looked so different from her that to the eye of the imagination she stood very much on her merits. All those people seemed so completely made up, so unconscious of effort, so surrounded with things to rest upon ; the men with their clean complexions, their well-hung chins, their cold, pleasant eyes, their shoulders set back, their absence of gesture ; the women, several very handsome, half strangled in strings of pearls, with smooth plain tresses, seeming to look at nothing in particular, supporting silence as if it were as becoming as candle-light, yet talking a little, sometimes, in fresh, rich voices. They were all wrapped in a community of ideas, of traditions ; they understood each other's accent, even each other's variations. Mrs. Headway, with all her prettiness, seemed to transcend these variations ; she looked foreign, exaggerated ; she had too much expression ; she might have been engaged for the evening. Waterville remarked, moreover, that English society was always looking out for amusement and that its transactions were conducted on a cash basis. If Mrs. Headway were amusing enough she would probably succeed, and

her fortune — if fortune there was — would not be a hinderance.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, he went up to her, but she gave him no greeting. She only looked at him with an expression he had never seen before — a strange, bold expression of displeasure.

“Why have you come down here?” she asked. “Have you come to watch me?”

Waterville colored to the roots of his hair. He knew it was terribly little like a diplomatist; but he was unable to control his blushes. Besides, he was shocked, he was angry, and in addition he was mystified. “I came because I was asked,” he said.

“Who asked you?”

“The same person that asked you, I suppose — Lady Demesne.”

“She’s an old cat!” Mrs. Headway exclaimed, turning away from him.

He turned away from her as well. He did n’t know what he had done to deserve such treatment. It was a complete surprise; he had never seen her like that before. She was a very vulgar woman; that was the way people talked, he supposed, at San Diego. He threw himself almost passionately into the conversation of the others, who all seemed to him, possibly a little by contrast, extraordinarily genial and friendly. He had not, however, the consolation of seeing Mrs. Headway punished for her rudeness, for she was not in the least neglected. On the contrary, in the part of the room where she sat the group was

denser, and every now and then it was agitated with unanimous laughter. If she should amuse them, he said to himself, she would succeed, and evidently she was amusing them.

VII.

IF she was strange, he had not come to the end of her strangeness. The next day was a Sunday and uncommonly fine ; he was down before breakfast, and took a walk in the park, stopping to gaze at the thin-legged deer, scattered like pins on a velvet cushion over some of the remoter slopes, and wandering along the edge of a large sheet of ornamental water, which had a temple, in imitation of that of Vesta, on an island in the middle. He thought at this time no more about Mrs. Headway ; he only reflected that these stately objects had for more than a hundred years furnished a background to a great deal of family history. A little more reflection would perhaps have suggested to him that Mrs. Headway was possibly an incident of some importance in the history of a family. Two or three ladies failed to appear at breakfast ; Mrs. Headway was one of them.

“ She tells me she never leaves her room till noon,” he heard Lady Demesne say to the general, her companion of the previous evening, who had asked about her. “ She takes three hours to dress.”

“ She’s a monstrous clever woman !” the general exclaimed.

“To do it in three hours?”

“No, I mean the way she keeps her wits about her.”

“Yes; I think she’s very clever,” said Lady Demesne, in a tone in which Waterville flattered himself that he saw more meaning than the general could see. There was something in this tall, straight, deliberate woman, who seemed at once benevolent and distant, that Waterville admired. With her delicate surface, her conventional mildness, he could see that she was very strong; she had set her patience upon a height, and she carried it like a diadem. She had very little to say to Waterville, but every now and then she made some inquiry of him that showed she had not forgotten him. Demesne himself was apparently in excellent spirits, though there was nothing bustling in his deportment, and he only went about looking very fresh and fair, as if he took a bath every hour or two, and very secure against the unexpected. Waterville had less conversation with him than with his mother; but the young man had found occasion to say to him the night before, in the smoking-room, that he was delighted Waterville had been able to come, and that if he was fond of real English scenery there were several things about there he should like very much to show him.

“You must give me an hour or two before you go, you know; I really think there are some things you’ll like.”

Sir Arthur spoke as if Waterville would be very

fastidious ; he seemed to wish to attach a vague importance to him. On the Sunday morning after breakfast he asked Waterville if he should care to go to church ; most of the ladies and several of the men were going.

“It’s just as you please, you know ; but it’s rather a pretty walk across the fields, and a curious little church of King Stephen’s time.”

Waterville knew what this meant ; it was already a picture. Besides, he liked going to church, especially when he sat in the Squire’s pew, which was sometimes as big as a boudoir. So he replied that he should be delighted. Then he added, without explaining his reason —

“Is Mrs. Headway going ?”

“I really don’t know,” said his host, with an abrupt change of tone—as if Waterville had asked him whether the housekeeper were going.

“The English are awfully queer !” Waterville indulged mentally in this exclamation, to which since his arrival in England he had had recourse whenever he encountered a gap in the consistency of things. The church was even a better picture than Sir Arthur’s description of it, and Waterville said to himself that Mrs. Headway had been a great fool not to come. He knew what she was after ; she wished to study English life, so that she might take possession of it, and to pass in among a hedge of bobbing rustics, and sit among the monuments of the old Demesnes, would have told her a great deal about

English life. If she wished to fortify herself for the struggle she had better come to that old church. When he returned to Longlands — he had walked back across the meadows with the canon's wife, who was a vigorous pedestrian — it wanted half an hour of luncheon, and he was unwilling to go indoors. He remembered that he had not yet seen the gardens, and he wandered away in search of them. They were on a scale which enabled him to find them without difficulty, and they looked as if they had been kept up unremittingly for a century or two. He had not advanced very far between their blooming borders when he heard a voice that he recognized, and a moment after, at the turn of an alley, he came upon Mrs. Headway, who was attended by the master of Longlands. She was bareheaded beneath her parasol, which she flung back, stopping short, as she beheld her compatriot.

"Oh, it's Mr. Waterville come to spy me out as usual!" It was with this remark that she greeted the slightly embarrassed young man.

"Hallo! you've come home from church," Sir Arthur said, pulling out his watch.

Waterville was struck with his coolness. He admired it; for, after all, he said to himself, it must have been disagreeable to him to be interrupted. He felt a little like a fool, and wished he had kept Mrs. April with him, to give him the air of having come for her sake.

Mrs. Headway looked adorably fresh, in a toilet

which Waterville, who had his ideas on such matters, was sure would not be regarded as the proper thing for a Sunday morning in an English country house; a *négligé* of white flounces and frills, interspersed with yellow ribbons — a garment which Madame de Pompadour might have worn when she received a visit from Louis XV., but would probably not have worn when she went into the world. The sight of this costume gave the finishing touch to Waterville's impression that Mrs. Headway knew, on the whole, what she was about. She would take a line of her own; she would not be too accommodating. She would not come down to breakfast; she would not go to church; she would wear on Sunday mornings little elaborately informal dresses, and look dreadfully un-British and un-Protestant. Perhaps, after all, this was better. She began to talk with a certain volubility.

"Is n't this too lovely? I walked all the way from the house. I'm not much at walking, but the grass in this place is like a parlor. The whole thing is beyond everything. Sir Arthur, you ought to go and look after the Ambassador; it's shameful the way I've kept you. You did n't care about the Ambassador? You said just now you had scarcely spoken to him, and you must make it up. I never saw such a way of neglecting your guests. Is that the usual style over here? Go and take him out for a ride, or make him play a game of billiards. Mr. Waterville will take me home; besides, I want to scold him for spying on me."

Waterville sharply resented this accusation. "I had no idea you were here," he declared.

"We were n't hiding," said Sir Arthur quietly. "Perhaps you'll see Mrs. Headway back to the house. I think I ought to look after old Davidoff. I believe lunch is at two."

He left them, and Waterville wandered through the gardens with Mrs. Headway. She immediately wished to know if he had come there to look after her; but this inquiry was accompanied, to his surprise, with the acrimony she had displayed the night before. He was determined not to let that pass, however; when people had treated him in that way they should not be allowed to forget it.

"Do you suppose I am always thinking of you?" he asked. "You're out of my mind sometimes. I came here to look at the gardens, and if you had n't spoken to me I should have passed on."

Mrs. Headway was perfectly good-natured; she appeared not even to hear his defence. "He has got two other places," she simply rejoined. "That's just what I wanted to know."

But Waterville would not be turned away from his grievance. That mode of reparation to a person whom you had insulted which consisted in forgetting that you had done so, was doubtless largely in use in New Mexico; but a person of honor demanded something more. "What did you mean last night by accusing me of having come down here to watch you? You must excuse me if I tell you that I think

you were rather rude." The sting of this accusation lay in the fact that there was a certain amount of truth in it; yet for a moment Mrs. Headway, looking very blank, failed to recognize the allusion. "She's a barbarian, after all," thought Waterville. "She thinks a woman may slap a man's face and run away!"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Headway, suddenly, "I remember, I was angry with you; I did n't expect to see you. But I did n't really care about it at all. Every now and then I am angry, like that, and I work it off on any one that's handy. But it's over in three minutes, and I never think of it again. I was angry last night; I was furious with the old woman."

"With the old woman?"

"With Sir Arthur's mother. She has no business here, any way. In this country, when the husband dies, they're expected to clear out. She has a house of her own, ten miles from here, and she has another in Portman Square; so she's got plenty of places to live. But she sticks—she sticks to him like a plaster. All of a sudden it came over me that she did n't invite me here because she liked me, but because she suspects me. She's afraid we'll make a match, and she thinks I ain't good enough for her son. She must think I'm in a great hurry to get hold of him. I never went after him, he came after me. I should never have thought of anything if it had n't been for him. He began it last summer at Homburg; he wanted to know why I did n't come to England;

he told me I should have great success. He does n't know much about it, any way ; he has n't got much gumption. But he's a very nice man, all the same ; it's very pleasant to see him surrounded by his —" And Mrs. Headway paused a moment, looking admiringly about her — "Surrounded by all his old heir-looms. I like the old place," she went on ; "it's beautifully mounted ; I'm quite satisfied with what I've seen. I thought Lady Demesne was very friendly ; she left a card on me in London, and very soon after, she wrote to me to ask me here. But I'm very quick ; I sometimes see things in a flash. I saw something yesterday, when she came to speak to me at dinner-time. She saw I looked pretty, and it made her blue with rage ; she hoped I would be ugly. I should like very much to oblige her ; but what can one do ? Then I saw that she had asked me here only because he insisted. He did n't come to see me when I first arrived — he never came near me for ten days. She managed to prevent him ; she got him to make some promise. But he changed his mind after a little, and then he had to do something really polite. He called three days in succession, and he made her come. She's one of those women that resists as long as she can, and then seems to give in, while she's really resisting more than ever. She hates me like poison ; I don't know what she thinks I've done. She's very underhand ; she's a regular old cat. When I saw you last night at dinner, I thought she had got you here to help her."

"To help her?" Waterville asked.

"To tell her about me. To give her information, that she can make use of against me. You may tell her what you like!"

Waterville was almost breathless with the attention he had given this extraordinary burst of confidence, and now he really felt faint. He stopped short; Mrs. Headway went on a few steps, and then, stopping too, turned and looked at him. "You're the most unspeakable woman!" he exclaimed. She seemed to him indeed a barbarian.

She laughed at him — he felt she was laughing at his expression of face — and her laugh rang through the stately gardens. "What sort of a woman is that?"

"You've got no delicacy," said Waterville, resolutely.

She colored quickly, though, strange to say, she appeared not to be angry. "No delicacy?" she repeated.

"You ought to keep those things to yourself."

"Oh, I know what you mean; I talk about everything. When I'm excited I've got to talk. But I must do things in my own way. I've got plenty of delicacy, when people are nice to me. Ask Arthur Demesne if I ain't delicate — ask George Littlemore if I ain't. Don't stand there all day; come in to lunch!" And Mrs. Headway resumed her walk, while Rupert Waterville, raising his eyes for a moment, slowly overtook her. "Wait till I get settled;

then I'll be delicate," she pursued. "You can't be delicate when you're trying to save your life. It's very well for *you* to talk, with the whole American Legation to back you. Of course I'm excited. I've got hold of this thing, and I don't mean to let go!" Before they reached the house she told him why he had been invited to Longlands at the same time as herself. Waterville would have liked to believe that his personal attractions sufficiently explained the fact; but she took no account of this supposition. Mrs. Headway preferred to think that she lived in an element of ingenious machination, and that most things that happened had reference to herself. Waterville had been asked because he represented, however modestly, the American Legation, and their host had a friendly desire to make it appear that this pretty American visitor, of whom no one knew anything, was under the protection of that establishment. "It would start me better," said Mrs. Headway, serenely. "You can't help yourself — you've helped to start me. If he had known the Minister he would have asked him — or the first secretary. But he don't know them."

They reached the house by the time Mrs. Headway had developed this idea, which gave Waterville a pretext more than sufficient for detaining her in the portico. "Do you mean to say Sir Arthur told you this?" he inquired, almost sternly.

"Told me? Of course not! Do you suppose I would let him take the tone with me that I need

any favors? I should like to hear him tell me that I'm in want of assistance!"

"I don't see why he should n't — at the pace you go yourself. You say it to every one."

"To every one? I say it to you, and to George Littlemore — when I'm nervous. I say it to you because I like you, and to him because I'm afraid of him. I'm not in the least afraid of you, by the way. I'm all alone — I haven't got any one. I must have some comfort, must n't I? Sir Arthur scolded me for putting you off last night — he noticed it; and that was what made me guess his idea."

"I'm much obliged to him," said Waterville, rather bewildered.

"So mind you answer for me. Don't you want to give me your arm, to go in?"

"You're a most extraordinary combination," he murmured, as she stood smiling at him.

"Oh, come, don't *you* fall in love with me!" she cried, with a laugh; and, without taking his arm, passed in before him.

That evening, before he went to dress for dinner, Waterville wandered into the library, where he felt sure that he should find some superior bindings. There was no one in the room, and he spent a happy half-hour among the treasures of literature and the triumphs of old morocco. He had a great esteem for good literature; he held that it should have handsome covers. The daylight had begun to

wane, but whenever, in the rich-looking dimness, he made out the glimmer of a well-gilded back, he took down the volume and carried it to one of the deep-set windows. He had just finished the inspection of a delightfully fragrant folio, and was about to carry it back to its niche, when he found himself standing face to face with Lady Demesne. He was startled for a moment, for her tall, slim figure, her fair visage, which looked white in the high, brown room, and the air of serious intention with which she presented herself, gave something spectral to her presence. He saw her smile, however, and heard her say, in that tone of hers which was sweet almost to sadness, "Are you looking at our books? I'm afraid they are rather dull."

"Dull? Why, they are as bright as the day they were bound." And he turned the glittering panels of his folio towards her.

"I'm afraid I have n't looked at them for a long time," she murmured, going nearer to the window, where she stood looking out. Beyond the clear pane the park stretched away, with the grayness of evening beginning to hang itself on the great limbs of the oaks. The place appeared cold and empty, and the trees had an air of conscious importance, as if nature herself had been bribed somehow to take the side of county families. Lady Demesne was not an easy person to talk with; she was neither spontaneous nor abundant; she was conscious of herself, conscious of many things. Her very simplicity was

conventional, though it was rather a noble convention. You might have pitied her, if you had seen that she lived in constant unrelaxed communion with certain rigid ideals. This made her at times seem tired, like a person who has undertaken too much. She gave an impression of still brightness, which was not at all brilliancy, but a carefully preserved purity. She said nothing for a moment, and there was an appearance of design in her silence, as if she wished to let him know that she had a certain business with him, without taking the trouble to announce it. She had been accustomed to expect that people would suppose things, and to be saved the trouble of explanations. Waterville made some hap-hazard remark about the beauty of the evening (in point of fact, the weather had changed for the worse), to which she vouchsafed no reply. Then, presently, she said, with her usual gentleness, "I hoped I should find you here — I wish to ask you something."

"Anything I can tell you — I shall be delighted!" Waterville exclaimed.

She gave him a look, not imperious, almost appealing, which seemed to say — "Please be very simple — very simple indeed." Then she glanced about her, as if there had been other people in the room; she did n't wish to appear closeted with him, or to have come on purpose. There she was, at any rate, and she went on. "When my son told me he should ask you to come down, I was very glad. I mean, of course, that we were delighted —" And she paused

a moment. Then she added, simply, "I want to ask you about Mrs. Headway."

"Ah, here it is!" cried Waterville within himself. More superficially, he smiled, as agreeably as possible, and said, "Ah yes, I see!"

"Do you mind my asking you? I hope you don't mind. I have n't any one else to ask."

"Your son knows her much better than I do." Waterville said this without an intention of malice, simply to escape from the difficulties of his situation; but after he had said it, he was almost frightened by its mocking sound.

"I don't think he knows her. She knows him, which is very different. When I ask him about her, he merely tells me she is fascinating. She *is* fascinating," said her ladyship, with inimitable dryness.

"So I think, myself. I like her very much," Waterville rejoined, cheerfully.

"You are in all the better position to speak of her, then."

"To speak well of her," said Waterville, smiling.

"Of course, if you can. I should be delighted to hear you do that. That's what I wish—to hear some good of her."

It might have seemed, after this, that nothing would have remained but for Waterville to launch himself in a panegyric of his mysterious countrywoman; but he was no more to be tempted into that danger than into another. "I can only say I like her," he repeated. "She has been very kind to me."

"Every one seems to like her," said Lady Demesne, with an unstudied effect of pathos. "She is certainly very amusing."

"She is very good-natured; she has lots of good intentions."

"What do you call good intentions?" asked Lady Demesne, very sweetly.

"Well, I mean that she wants to be friendly and pleasant."

"Of course you have to defend her. She's your countrywoman."

"To defend her — I must wait till she's attacked," said Waterville, laughing.

"That's very true. I need n't call your attention to the fact that I am not attacking her. I should never attack a person staying in this house. I only want to know something about her, and if you can't tell me, perhaps at least you can mention some one who will."

"She'll tell you herself. Tell you by the hour!"

"What she has told my son? I should n't understand it. My son does n't understand it. It's very strange. I rather hoped you might explain it."

Waterville was silent a moment. "I'm afraid I can't explain Mrs. Headway," he remarked at last.

"I see you admit she is very peculiar."

Waterville hesitated again. "It's too great a responsibility to answer you." He felt that he was very disobliging; he knew exactly what Lady Demesne wished him to say. He was unprepared to

blight the reputation of Mrs. Headway to accommodate Lady Demesne; and yet, with his active little imagination, he could enter perfectly into the feelings of this tender, formal, serious woman, who — it was easy to see — had looked for her own happiness in the cultivation of duty and in extreme constancy to two or three objects of devotion chosen once for all. She must, indeed, have had a vision of things which would represent Mrs. Headway as both displeasing and dangerous. But he presently became aware that she had taken his last words as a concession in which she might find help.

“You know why I ask you these things, then?”

“I think I have an idea,” said Waterville, persisting in irrelevant laughter. His laugh sounded foolish in his own ears.

“If you know that, I think you ought to assist me.” Her tone changed as she spoke these words; there was a quick tremor in it; he could see it was a confession of distress. Her distress was deep; he immediately felt that it must have been, before she made up her mind to speak to him. He was sorry for her, and determined to be very serious.

“If I could help you I would. But my position is very difficult.”

“It’s not so difficult as mine!” She was going all lengths; she was really appealing to him. “I don’t imagine that you are under any obligation to Mrs. Headway — you seem to me very different,” she added.

Waterville was not insensible to any discrimination that told in his favor ; but these words gave him a slight shock, as if they had been an attempt at bribery. "I am surprised that you don't like her," he ventured to observe.

Lady Demesne looked out of the window a little. "I don't think you are really surprised, though possibly you try to be. I don't like her, at any rate, and I can't fancy why my son should. She's very pretty, and she appears to be very clever ; but I don't trust her. I don't know what has taken possession of him ; it is not usual in his family to marry people like that. I don't think she's a lady. The person I should wish for him would be so very different — perhaps you can see what I mean. There's something in her history that we don't understand. My son understands it no better than I. If you could only explain to us, that might be a help. I treat you with great confidence the first time I see you ; it's because I don't know where to turn. I am exceedingly anxious."

It was very plain that she was anxious ; her manner had become more vehement ; her eyes seemed to shine in the thickening dusk. "Are you very sure there is danger ?" Waterville asked. "Has he asked her to marry him, and has she consented ?"

"If I wait till they settle it all, it will be too late. I have reason to believe that my son is not engaged, but he is terribly entangled. At the same time he is very uneasy, and that may save him yet. He has

a great sense of honor. He is not satisfied about her past life ; he does n't know what to think of what we have been told. Even what she admits is so strange. She has been married four or five times—she has been divorced again and again—it seems so extraordinary. She tells him that in America it is different, and I daresay you have not our ideas ; but really there is a limit to everything. There must have been some great irregularities—I am afraid some great scandals. It's dreadful to have to accept such things. He has not told me all this ; but it's not necessary he should tell me ; I know him well enough to guess."

"Does he know that you have spoken to me ?" Waterville asked.

"Not in the least. But I must tell you that I shall repeat to him anything that you may say against her."

"I had better say nothing, then. It's very delicate. Mrs. Headway is quite undefended. One may like her or not, of course. I have seen nothing of her that is not perfectly correct."

"And you have heard nothing ?"

Waterville remembered Littlemore's assertion that there were cases in which a man was bound in honor to tell an untruth, and he wondered whether this were such a case. Lady Demesne imposed herself, she made him believe in the reality of her grievance, and he saw the gulf that divided her from a pushing little woman who had lived with Western editors.

She was right to wish not to be connected with Mrs. Headway. After all, there had been nothing in his relations with that lady to make it incumbent on him to lie for her. He had not sought her acquaintance, she had sought his ; she had sent for him to come and see her. And yet he couldn't give her away, as they said in New York ; that stuck in his throat. " I am afraid I really can't say anything. And it would n't matter. Your son won't give her up because I happen not to like her."

" If he were to believe she has done wrong, he would give her up."

" Well, I have no right to say so," said Waterville.

Lady Demesne turned away ; she was much disappointed in him. He was afraid she was going to break out—" Why, then, do you suppose I asked you here ?" She quitted her place near the window and was apparently about to leave the room. But she stopped short. " You know something against her, but you won't say it."

Waterville hugged his folio and looked awkward. " You attribute things to me. I shall never say anything."

" Of course you are perfectly free. There is some one else who knows, I think—another American—a gentleman who was in Paris when my son was there. I have forgotten his name."

" A friend of Mrs. Headway's ? I suppose you mean George Littlemore."

" Yes — Mr. Littlemore. He has a sister, whom

I have met; I did n't know she was his sister till to-day. Mrs. Headway spoke of her, but I find she does n't know her. That itself is a proof, I think. Do you think *he* would help me?" Lady Demesne asked, very simply.

"I doubt it, but you can try."

"I wish he had come with you. Do you think he would come?"

"He is in America at this moment, but I believe he soon comes back."

"I shall go to his sister; I will ask her to bring him to see me. She is extremely nice; I think she will understand. Unfortunately there is very little time."

"Don't count too much on Littlemore," said Waterville, gravely.

"You men have no pity."

"Why should we pity you? How can Mrs. Headway hurt such a person as you?"

Lady Demesne hesitated a moment. "It hurts me to hear her voice."

"Her voice is very sweet."

"Possibly. But she's horrible!"

This was too much, it seemed to Waterville; poor Mrs. Headway was extremely open to criticism, and he himself had declared she was a barbarian. Yet she was not horrible. "It's for your son to pity you. If he does n't, how can you expect it of others?"

"Oh, but he does!" And with a majesty that

was more striking even than her logic, Lady Demesne moved towards the door.

Waterville advanced to open it for her, and as she passed out he said, "There's one thing you can do—try to like her!"

She shot him a terrible glance. "That would be worst of all!"

VIII.

GEORGE LITTLEMORE arrived in London on the twentieth of May, and one of the first things he did was to go and see Waterville at the Legation, where he made known to him that he had taken for the rest of the season a house at Queen Anne's Gate, so that his sister and her husband, who, under the pressure of diminished rents, had let their own town-residence, might come up and spend a couple of months with him.

"One of the consequences of your having a house will be that you will have to entertain Mrs. Headway," Waterville said.

Littlemore sat there with his hands crossed upon his stick; he looked at Waterville with an eye that failed to kindle at the mention of this lady's name. "Has she got into European society?" he asked, rather languidly.

"Very much, I should say. She has a house, and a carriage, and diamonds, and everything handsome. She seems already to know a lot of people; they put

her name in the *Morning Post*. She has come up very quickly; she's almost famous. Every one is asking about her — you'll be plied with questions."

Littlemore listened gravely. "How did she get in?"

"She met a large party at Longlands, and made them all think her great fun. They must have taken her up; she only wanted a start."

Littlemore seemed suddenly to be struck with the grotesqueness of this news, to which his first response was a burst of quick laughter. "To think of Nancy Beck! The people here are queer people. There's no one they won't go after. They would n't touch her in New York."

"Oh, New York's old-fashioned," said Waterville; and he announced to his friend that Lady Demesne was very eager for his arrival, and wanted to make him help her prevent her son's bringing such a person into the family. Littlemore apparently was not alarmed at her ladyship's projects, and intimated, in the manner of a man who thought them rather impertinent, that he could trust himself to keep out of her way. "It is n't a proper marriage, at any rate," Waterville declared.

"Why not, if he loves her?"

"Oh, if that's all you want!" cried Waterville, with a degree of cynicism that rather surprised his companion. "Would you marry her yourself?"

"Certainly, if I were in love with her."

"You took care not to be that."

“Yes, I did — and so Demesne had better have done. But since he’s bitten — !” and Littlemore terminated his sentence in a suppressed yawn.

Waterville presently asked him how he would manage, in view of his sister’s advent, about asking Mrs. Headway to his house ; and he replied that he would manage by simply not asking her. Upon this, Waterville declared that he was very inconsistent ; to which Littlemore rejoined that it was very possible. But he asked whether they could n’t talk about something else than Mrs. Headway. He could n’t enter into the young man’s interest in her, and was sure to have enough of her later.

Waterville would have been sorry to give a false idea of his interest in Mrs. Headway ; for he flattered himself the feeling had definite limits. He had been two or three times to see her ; but it was a relief to think that she was now quite independent of him. There had been no revival of that intimate intercourse which occurred during the visit to Longlands. She could dispense with assistance now ; she knew herself that she was in the current of success. She pretended to be surprised at her good fortune, especially at its rapidity ; but she was really surprised at nothing. She took things as they came, and, being essentially a woman of action, wasted almost as little time in elation as she would have done in despondence. She talked a great deal about Lord Edward and Lady Margaret, and about such other members of the nobility as had shown a desire to cultivate her

acquaintance; professing to understand perfectly the sources of a popularity which apparently was destined to increase. "They come to laugh at me," she said; "they come simply to get things to repeat. I can't open my mouth but they burst into fits. It's a settled thing that I'm an American humorist; if I say the simplest things, they begin to roar. I must express myself somehow; and indeed when I hold my tongue they think me funnier than ever. They repeat what I say to a great person, and a great person told some of them the other night that he wanted to hear me for himself. I'll do for him what I do for the others; no better and no worse. I don't know how I do it; I talk the only way I can. They tell me it is n't so much the things I say as the way I say them. Well, they're very easy to please. They don't care for me; it's only to be able to repeat Mrs. Headway's 'last.' Every one wants to have it first; it's a regular race." When she found what was expected of her, she undertook to supply the article in abundance; and the poor little woman really worked hard at her Americanisms. If the taste of London lay that way, she would do her best to gratify it; it was only a pity she had n't known it before; she would have made more extensive preparations. She thought it a disadvantage, of old, to live in Arizona, in Dakotah, in the newly admitted States; but now she perceived that, as she phrased it to herself, this was the best thing that ever had happened to her. She tried to remember all the

queer stories she had heard out there, and keenly regretted that she had not taken them down in writing; she drummed up the echoes of the Rocky Mountains and practised the intonations of the Pacific slope. When she saw her audience in convulsions, she said to herself that this was success, and believed that, if she had only come to London five years sooner, she might have married a duke. That would have been even a more absorbing spectacle for the London world than the actual proceedings of Sir Arthur Demesne, who, however, lived sufficiently in the eye of society to justify the rumor that there were bets about town as to the issue of his already protracted courtship. It was food for curiosity to see a young man of his pattern — one of the few “earnest” young men of the Tory side, with an income sufficient for tastes more marked than those by which he was known — make up to a lady several years older than himself, whose fund of Californian slang was even larger than her stock of dollars. Mrs. Headway had got a good many new ideas since her arrival in London, but she also retained several old ones. The chief of these — it was now a year old — was that Sir Arthur Demesne was the most irreproachable young man in the world. There were, of course, a good many things that he was not. He was not amusing; he was not insinuating; he was not of an absolutely irrepressible ardor. She believed he was constant; but he was certainly not eager. With these things, however, Mrs. Headway could perfectly

dispense; she had, in particular, quite outlived the need of being amused. She had had a very exciting life, and her vision of happiness at present was to be magnificently bored. The idea of complete and uncriticised respectability filled her soul with satisfaction; her imagination prostrated itself in the presence of this virtue. She was aware that she had achieved it but ill in her own person; but she could now, at least, connect herself with it by sacred ties. She could prove in that way what was her deepest feeling. This was a religious appreciation of Sir Arthur's great quality — his smooth and rounded, his blooming, lily-like exemption from social flaws.

She was at home when Littlemore went to see her, and surrounded by several visitors, to whom she was giving a late cup of tea and to whom she introduced her compatriot. He stayed till they dispersed, in spite of the manœuvres of a gentleman who evidently desired to outstay him, but who, whatever might have been his happy fortune on former visits, received on this occasion no encouragement from Mrs. Headway. He looked at Littlemore slowly, beginning with his boots and travelling upwards, as if to discover the reason of so unexpected a preference, and then, without a salutation, left him face to face with their hostess.

"I'm curious to see what you'll do for me, now that you've got your sister with you," Mrs. Headway presently remarked, having heard of this circumstance from Rupert Waterville. "I suppose you'll have to

do something, you know. I'm sorry for you ; but I don't see how you can get off. You might ask me to dine some day when she's dining out. I would come even then, I think, because I want to keep on the right side of you."

"I call that the wrong side," said Littlemore.

"Yes, I see. It's your sister that's on the right side. You're in rather an embarrassing position, ain't you? However, you take those things very quietly. There's something in you that exasperates me. What does your sister think of me? Does she hate me?"

"She knows nothing about you."

"Have you told her nothing?"

"Never a word."

"Has n't she asked you? That shows that she hates me. She thinks I ain't creditable to America. I know all that. She wants to show people over here that, however they may be taken in by me, she knows much better. But she'll have to ask you about me; she can't go on for ever. Then what'll you say?"

"That you're the most successful woman in Europe."

"Oh, bother!" cried Mrs. Headway, with irritation.

"Have n't you got into European society?"

"Maybe I have, maybe I have n't. It's too soon to see. I can't tell this season. Every one says I've got to wait till next, to see if it's the same. Sometimes they take you up for a few weeks, and then never know you again. You've got to fasten the thing somehow — to drive in a nail."

"You speak as if it were your coffin," said Littlemore.

"Well, it is a kind of coffin. I'm burying my past!"

Littlemore winced at this. He was tired to death of her past. He changed the subject, and made her talk about London, a topic which she treated with a great deal of humor. She entertained him for half an hour, at the expense of most of her new acquaintances and of some of the most venerable features of the great city. He himself looked at England from the outside, as much as it was possible to do; but in the midst of her familiar allusions to people and things known to her only since yesterday, he was struck with the fact that she would never really be initiated. She buzzed over the surface of things like a fly on a window-pane. She liked it immensely; she was flattered, encouraged, excited; she dropped her confident judgments as if she were scattering flowers, and talked about her intentions, her prospects, her wishes. But she knew no more about English life than about the molecular theory. The words in which he had described her of old to Waterville came back to him: "*Elle ne se doute de rien!*" Suddenly she jumped up; she was going out to dine, and it was time to dress. "Before you leave I want you to promise me something," she said off-hand, but with a look which he had seen before and which meant that the point was important. "You'll be sure to be questioned about me." And then she paused.

“How do people know I know you?”

“You have n’t bragged about it? Is that what you mean? You can be a brute when you try. They do know it, at any rate. Possibly I may have told them. They ’ll come to you, to ask about me. I mean from Lady Demesne. She’s in an awful state — she’s so afraid her son ’ll marry me.”

Littlemore was unable to control a laugh. “I’m not, if he has n’t done it yet.”

“He can’t make up his mind. He likes me so much, yet he thinks I’m not a woman to marry.” It was positively grotesque, the detachment with which she spoke of herself.

“He must be a poor creature if he won’t marry you as you are,” Littlemore said.

This was not a very gallant form of speech; but Mrs. Headway let it pass. She only replied, “Well, he wants to be very careful, and so he ought to be!”

“If he asks too many questions, he’s not worth marrying.”

“I beg your pardon — he’s worth marrying whatever he does — he’s worth marrying for me. And I want to marry him — that’s what I want to do.”

“Is he waiting for me, to settle it?”

“He’s waiting for I don’t know what — for some one to come and tell him that I’m the sweetest of the sweet. Then he’ll believe it. Some one who has been out there and knows all about me. Of course you’re the man, you’re created on purpose. Don’t you remember how I told you in Paris that he

wanted to ask you? He was ashamed, and he gave it up; he tried to forget me. But now it's all on again; only, meanwhile, his mother has been at him. She works at him night and day, like a weasel in a hole, to persuade him that I'm far beneath him. He's very fond of her, and he's very open to influence—I mean from his mother, not from any one else. Except me, of course. Oh, I've influenced him, I've explained everything fifty times over. But some things are rather complicated, don't you know; and he keeps coming back to them. He wants every little speck explained. He won't come to you himself, but his mother will, or she'll send some of her people. I guess she'll send the lawyer—the family solicitor, they call him. She wanted to send him out to America to make inquiries, only she didn't know where to send. Of course I could n't be expected to give the places, they've got to find them out for themselves. She knows all about you, and she has made the acquaintance of your sister. So you see how much I know. She's waiting for you; she means to catch you. She has an idea she can fix you—make you say what'll meet her views. Then she'll lay it before Sir Arthur. So you'll be so good as to deny everything.”

Littlemore listened to this little address attentively, but the conclusion left him staring. “You don't mean that anything I can say will make a difference?”

“Don't be affected! You know it will as well as I.”

“You make him out a precious idiot.”

“Never mind what I make him out. I want to marry him, that’s all. And I appeal to you solemnly. You can save me, as you can lose me. If you lose me, you’ll be a coward. And if you say a word against me, I shall be lost.”

“Go and dress for dinner, that’s your salvation,” Littlemore answered, separating from her at the head of the stairs.

IX.

IT was very well for him to take that tone; but he felt as he walked home that he should scarcely know what to say to people who were determined, as Mrs. Headway put it, to catch him. She had worked a certain spell; she had succeeded in making him feel responsible. The sight of her success, however, rather hardened his heart; he was irritated by her ascending movement. He dined alone that evening, while his sister and her husband, who had engagements every day for a month, partook of their repast at the expense of some friends. Mrs. Dolphin, however, came home rather early, and immediately sought admittance to the small apartment at the foot of the staircase, which was already spoken of as Littlemore’s den. Reginald had gone to a “squash” somewhere, and she had returned without delay, having something particular to say to her brother. She was too impatient even to wait till the next morning. She

looked impatient ; she was very unlike George Littlemore. "I want you to tell me about Mrs. Headway," she said, while he started slightly at the coincidence of this remark with his own thoughts. He was just making up his mind at last to speak to her. She unfastened her cloak and tossed it over a chair, then pulled off her long tight black gloves, which were not so fine as those Mrs. Headway wore ; all this as if she were preparing herself for an important interview. She was a small, neat woman, who had once been pretty, with a small, thin voice, a sweet, quiet manner, and a perfect knowledge of what it was proper to do on every occasion in life. She always did it, and her conception of it was so definite that failure would have left her without excuse. She was usually not taken for an American, but she made a point of being one, because she flattered herself that she was of a type which, in that nationality, borrowed distinction from its rarity. She was by nature a great conservative, and had ended by being a better Tory than her husband. She was thought by some of her old friends to have changed immensely since her marriage. She knew as much about English society as if she had invented it ; had a way, usually, of looking as if she were dressed for a ride ; had also thin lips and pretty teeth ; and was as positive as she was amiable. She told her brother that Mrs. Headway had given out that he was her most intimate friend, and she thought it rather odd he had never spoken of her. He admitted that he had known her a long

time, referred to the circumstances in which the acquaintance had sprung up, and added that he had seen her that afternoon. He sat there smoking his cigar and looking at the ceiling, while Mrs. Dolphin delivered herself of a series of questions. Was it true that he liked her so much, was it true he thought her a possible woman to marry, was it not true that her antecedents had been most peculiar?

"I may as well tell you that I have a letter from Lady Demesne," Mrs. Dolphin said. "It came to me just before I went out, and I have it in my pocket."

She drew forth the missive, which she evidently wished to read to him; but he gave her no invitation to do so. He knew that she had come to him to extract a declaration adverse to Mrs. Headway's projects, and however little satisfaction he might take in this lady's upward flight, he hated to be urged and pushed. He had a great esteem for Mrs. Dolphin, who, among other Hampshire notions, had picked up that of the preponderance of the male members of a family, so that she treated him with a consideration which made his having an English sister rather a luxury. Nevertheless he was not very encouraging about Mrs. Headway. He admitted once for all that she had not behaved properly—it was n't worth while to split hairs about that—but he could n't see that she was much worse than many other women, and he could n't get up much feeling about her marrying or not marrying. Moreover, it was none of his business, and he intimated that it was none of Mrs. Dolphin's.

"One surely can't resist the claims of common humanity!" his sister replied; and she added that he was very inconsistent. He didn't respect Mrs. Headway, he knew the most dreadful things about her, he didn't think her fit company for his own flesh and blood. And yet he was willing to let poor Arthur Demesne be taken in by her!

"Perfectly willing!" Littlemore exclaimed. "All I've got to do is not to marry her myself."

"Don't you think we have any responsibilities, any duties?"

"I don't know what you mean. If she can succeed, she's welcome. It's a splendid sight in its way."

"How do you mean splendid?"

"Why, she has run up the tree as if she were a squirrel!"

"It's very true that she has an audacity *à toute épreuve*. But English society has become scandalously easy. I never saw anything like the people that are taken up. Mrs. Headway has had only to appear to succeed. If they think there's something bad about you they'll be sure to run after you. It's like the decadence of the Roman Empire. You can see to look at Mrs. Headway that she's not a lady. She's pretty, very pretty, but she looks like a dissipated dressmaker. She failed absolutely in New York. I have seen her three times — she apparently goes everywhere. I didn't speak of her — I was wanting to see what you would do. I saw that you

meant to do nothing, then this letter decided me. It's written on purpose to be shown to you; it's what she wants you to do. She wrote to me before I came to town, and I went to see her as soon as I arrived. I think it very important. I told her that if she would draw up a little statement I would put it before you as soon as we got settled. She's in real distress. I think you ought to feel for her. You ought to communicate the facts exactly as they stand. A woman has no right to do such things and come and ask to be accepted. She may make it up with her conscience, but she can't make it up with society. Last night at Lady Dovedale's I was afraid she would know who I was and come and speak to me. I was so frightened that I went away. If Sir Arthur wishes to marry her for what she is, of course he's welcome. But at least he ought to know."

Mrs. Dolphin was not excited nor voluble; she moved from point to point with a calmness which had all the air of being used to have reason on its side. She deeply desired, however, that Mrs. Headway's triumphant career should be checked; she had sufficiently abused the facilities of things. Herself a party to an international marriage, Mrs. Dolphin naturally wished that the class to which she belonged should close its ranks and carry its standard high.

"It seems to me that she's quite as good as the little baronet," said Littlemore, lighting another cigar.

"As good? What do you mean? No one has ever breathed a word against him."

“Very likely. But he’s a nonentity, and she at least is somebody. She’s a person, and a very clever one. Besides, she’s quite as good as the women that lots of them have married. I never heard that the British gentry were so unspotted.”

“I know nothing about other cases,” Mrs. Dolphin said, “I only know about this one. It so happens that I have been brought near to it, and that an appeal has been made to me. The English are very romantic — the most romantic people in the world, if that’s what you mean. They do the strangest things, from the force of passion — even those from whom you would least expect it. They marry their cooks — they marry their coachmen — and their romances always have the most miserable end. I’m sure this one would be most wretched. How can you pretend that such a woman as that is to be trusted? What I see is a fine old race — one of the oldest and most honorable in England, people with every tradition of good conduct and high principle — and a dreadful, disreputable, vulgar little woman, who has n’t an idea of what such things are, trying to force her way into it. I hate to see such things — I want to go to the rescue!”

“I don’t — I don’t care anything about the fine old race.”

“Not from interested motives, of course, any more than I. But surely, on artistic grounds, on grounds of decency?”

“Mrs. Headway is n’t indecent — you go too far.

You must remember that she's an old friend of mine." Littlemore had become rather stern; Mrs. Dolphin was forgetting the consideration due, from an English point of view, to brothers.

She forgot it even a little more. "Oh, if you are in love with her, too!" she murmured, turning away.

He made no answer to this, and the words had no sting for him. But at last, to finish the affair, he asked what in the world the old lady wanted him to do. Did she want him to go out into Piccadilly and announce to the passers-by that there was one winter when even Mrs. Headway's sister did n't know who was her husband?

Mrs. Dolphin answered this inquiry by reading out Lady Demesne's letter, which her brother, as she folded it up again, pronounced one of the most extraordinary letters he had ever heard.

"It's very sad — it's a cry of distress," said Mrs. Dolphin. "The whole meaning of it is that she wishes you would come and see her. She does n't say so in so many words, but I can read between the lines. Besides, she told me she would give anything to see you. Let me assure you it's your duty to go."

"To go and abuse Nancy Beck?"

"Go and praise her, if you like!" This was very clever of Mrs. Dolphin, but her brother was not so easily caught. He did n't take that view of his duty, and he declined to cross her ladyship's threshold. "Then she'll come and see you," said Mrs. Dolphin, with decision.

"If she does, I'll tell her Nancy's an angel."

"If you can say so conscientiously, she'll be delighted to hear it," Mrs. Dolphin replied, as she gathered up her cloak and gloves.

Meeting Rupert Waterville the next day, as he often did, at the St. George's Club, which offers a much-appreciated hospitality to secretaries of legation and to the natives of the countries they assist in representing, Littlemore let him know that his prophecy had been fulfilled and that Lady Demesne had been making proposals for an interview. "My sister read me a most remarkable letter from her," he said.

"What sort of a letter?"

"The letter of a woman so scared that she will do anything. I may be a great brute, but her fright amuses me."

"You're in the position of Olivier de Jalin, in the *Demi-Monde*," Waterville remarked.

"In the *Demi-Monde*?" Littlemore was not quick at catching literary allusions.

"Don't you remember the play we saw in Paris? Or like Don Fabrice in *L'Aventurière*. A bad woman tries to marry an honorable man, who does n't know how bad she is, and they who do know step in and push her back."

"Yes, I remember. There was a good deal of lying, all round."

"They prevented the marriage, however, which is the great thing."

"The great thing, if you care about it. One of them was the intimate friend of the fellow, the other was his son. Demesne's nothing to me."

"He's a very good fellow," said Waterville.

"Go and tell him, then."

"Play the part of Olivier de Jalin? Oh, I can't; I'm not Olivier. But I wish he would come along. Mrs. Headway ought n't really to be allowed to pass."

"I wish to heaven they'd let me alone," Littlemore murmured, ruefully, staring for a while out of the window.

"Do you still hold to that theory you propounded in Paris? Are you willing to commit perjury?" Waterville asked.

"Of course I can refuse to answer questions—even that one."

"As I told you before, that will amount to a condemnation."

"It may amount to what it pleases. I think I will go to Paris."

"That will be the same as not answering. But it's quite the best thing you can do. I have been thinking a great deal about it, and it seems to me, from the social point of view, that, as I say, she really ought n't to pass." Waterville had the air of looking at the thing from a great elevation; his tone, the expression of his face, indicated this lofty flight; the effect of which, as he glanced down at his didactic young friend, Littlemore found peculiarly irritating.

"No, after all, hanged if they shall drive me away!" he exclaimed abruptly; and walked off, while his companion looked after him.

X.

THE morning after this Littlemore received a note from Mrs. Headway — a short and simple note, consisting merely of the words, "I shall be at home this afternoon; will you come and see me at five? I have something particular to say to you." He sent no answer to this inquiry, but he went to the little house in Chesterfield Street at the hour that its mistress had designated.

"I don't believe you know what sort of woman I am!" she exclaimed, as soon as he stood before her.

"Oh, Lord!" Littlemore groaned, dropping into a chair. Then he added, "Don't begin on that sort of thing!"

"I shall begin — that's what I wanted to say. It's very important. You don't know me — you don't understand me. You think you do — but you don't."

"It is n't for the want of your having told me — many, many times!" And Littlemore smiled, though he was bored at the prospect that opened before him. The last word of all was, decidedly, that Mrs. Headway was a nuisance. She did n't deserve to be spared!

She glared at him a little, at this ; her face was no longer the face that smiled. She looked sharp and violent, almost old ; the change was complete. But she gave a little angry laugh. "Yes, I know ; men are so stupid. They know nothing about women but what women tell them. And women tell them things on purpose, to see how stupid they can be. I've told you things like that, just for amusement, when it was dull. If you believed them, it was your own fault. But now I am serious, I want you really to know."

"I don't want to know. I know enough."

"How do you mean, you know enough ?" she cried, with a flushed face. "What business have you to know anything?" The poor little woman, in her passionate purpose, was not obliged to be consistent, and the loud laugh with which Littlemore greeted this interrogation must have seemed to her unduly harsh. "You shall know what I want you to know, however. You think me a bad woman—you don't respect me ; I told you that in Paris. I have done things I don't understand, myself, to-day ; that I admit, as fully as you please. But I've completely changed, and I want to change everything. You ought to enter into that ; you ought to see what I want. I hate everything that has happened to me before this ; I loathe it, I despise it. I went on that way trying—one thing and another. But now I've got what I want. Do you expect me to go down on my knees to you ? I believe I will, I'm so anxious. You can help me—no one else can do a thing—no

one can do anything—they are only waiting to see if he'll do it. I told you in Paris you could help me, and it's just as true now. Say a good word for me, for God's sake! You have n't lifted your little finger, or I should know it by this time. It will just make the difference. Or if your sister would come and see me, I should be all right. Women are pitiless, pitiless, and you are pitiless too. It is n't that she's anything so great, most of my friends are better than that!—but she's the one woman who *knows*, and people know that she knows. *He* knows that she knows, and he knows she does n't come. So she kills me — she kills me! I understand perfectly what he wants—I shall do everything, be anything, I shall be the most perfect wife. The old woman will adore me when she knows me—it's too stupid of her not to see. Everything in the past is over; it has all fallen away from me; it's the life of another woman. This was what I wanted; I knew I should find it some day. What could I do in those horrible places? I had to take what I could. But now I've got a nice country. I want you to do me justice; you have never done me justice; that's what I sent for you for."

Littlemore suddenly ceased to be bored; but a variety of feelings had taken the place of a single one. It was impossible not to be touched; she really meant what she said. People don't change their nature; but they change their desires, their ideal, their effort. This incoherent and passionate protes-

tation was an assurance that she was literally panting to be respectable. But the poor woman, whatever she did, was condemned, as Littlemore had said of old, in Paris, to Waterville, to be only half-right. The color rose to her visitor's face as he listened to this outpouring of anxiety and egotism; she had not managed her early life very well, but there was no need of her going down on her knees. "It's very painful to me to hear all this," he said. "You are under no obligation to say such things to me. You entirely misconceive my attitude—my influence."

"Oh yes, you shirk it—you only wish to shirk it!" she cried, flinging away fiercely the sofa-cushion on which she had been resting.

"Marry whom you please!" Littlemore almost shouted, springing to his feet.

He had hardly spoken when the door was thrown open, and the servant announced Sir Arthur Demesne. The baronet entered with a certain briskness, but he stopped short on seeing that Mrs. Headway had another visitor. Recognizing Littlemore, however, he gave a slight exclamation, which might have passed for a greeting. Mrs. Headway, who had risen as he came in, looked with extraordinary earnestness from one of the men to the other; then, like a person who had a sudden inspiration, she clasped her hands together and cried out, "I'm so glad you've met; if I had arranged it, it could n't be better!"

“If you had arranged it?” said Sir Arthur, crinkling a little his high, white forehead, while the conviction rose before Littlemore that she had indeed arranged it.

“I’m going to do something very strange,” she went on, and her eye glittered with a light that confirmed her words.

“You’re excited, I’m afraid you’re ill.” Sir Arthur stood there with his hat and his stick; he was evidently much annoyed.

“It’s an excellent opportunity; you must forgive me if I take advantage.” And she flashed a tender, touching ray at the baronet. “I have wanted this a long time—perhaps you have seen I wanted it. Mr. Littlemore has known me a long, long time; he’s an old, old friend. I told you that in Paris, don’t you remember? Well, he’s my only one, and I want him to speak for me.” Her eyes had turned now to Littlemore; they rested upon him with a sweetness that only made the whole proceeding more audacious. She had begun to smile again, though she was visibly trembling. “He’s my only one,” she continued; “it’s a great pity, you ought to have known others. But I’m very much alone, I must make the best of what I have. I want so much that some one else than myself should speak for me. Women usually can ask that service of a relative, or of another woman. I can’t; it’s a great pity, but it’s not my fault, it’s my misfortune. None of my people are here; and I’m

terribly alone in the world. But Mr. Littlemore will tell you ; he will say he has known me for years. He will tell you whether he knows any reason—whether he knows anything against me. He's been wanting the chance ; but he thought he could n't begin himself. You see I treat you as an old friend, dear Mr. Littlemore. I will leave you with Sir Arthur. You will both excuse me." The expression of her face, turned towards Littlemore, as she delivered herself of this singular proposal had the intentness of a magician who wishes to work a spell. She gave Sir Arthur another smile, and then she swept out of the room.

The two men remained in the extraordinary position that she had created for them ; neither of them moved even to open the door for her. She closed it behind her, and for a moment there was a deep, portentous silence. Sir Arthur Demesne, who was very pale, stared hard at the carpet.

"I am placed in an impossible situation," Littlemore said at last, "and I don't imagine that you accept it any more than I do."

The baronet kept the same attitude ; he neither looked up nor answered. Littlemore felt a sudden gush of pity for him. Of course he could n't accept the situation ; but all the same, he was half sick with anxiety to see how this nondescript American, who was both so valuable and so superfluous, so familiar and so inscrutable, would consider Mrs. Headway's challenge.

“Have you any question to ask me?” Littlemore went on.

At this Sir Arthur looked up. Littlemore had seen the look before; he had described it to Waterville after the baronet came to call on him in Paris. There were other things mingled with it now — shame, annoyance, pride; but the great thing, the intense desire to *know*, was paramount.

“Good God, how can I tell him?” Littlemore exclaimed to himself.

Sir Arthur’s hesitation was probably extremely brief; but Littlemore heard the ticking of the clock while it lasted. “Certainly, I have no question to ask,” the young man said in a voice of cool, almost insolent surprise.

“Good-day, then.”

“Good-day.”

And Littlemore left Sir Arthur in possession. He expected to find Mrs. Headway at the foot of the staircase; but he quitted the house without interruption.

On the morrow, after lunch, as he was leaving the little mansion at Queen Anne’s Gate, the postman handed him a letter. Littlemore opened and read it on the steps of his house, an operation which took but a moment. It ran as follows:—

“DEAR MR. LITTLEMORE,—It will interest you to know that I am engaged to be married to Sir Arthur Demesne, and that our marriage is to take place as soon as their stupid old Parliament rises. But it’s not to come out for some days, and

I am sure that I can trust meanwhile to your complete discretion.

“Yours very sincerely,

“NANCY H.

“P.S. — He made me a terrible scene for what I did yesterday, but he came back in the evening and made it up. That’s how the thing comes to be settled. He won’t tell me what passed between you — he requested me never to allude to the subject. I don’t care ; I was bound you should speak !”

Littlemore thrust this epistle into his pocket and marched away with it. He had come out to do various things, but he forgot his business for the time, and before he knew it had walked into Hyde Park. He left the carriages and riders to one side of him and followed the Serpentine into Kensington Gardens, of which he made the complete circuit. He felt annoyed, and more disappointed than he understood — than he would have understood if he had tried. Now that Nancy Beck had succeeded, her success seemed offensive, and he was almost sorry he had not said to Sir Arthur — “Oh, well, she was pretty bad, you know.” However, now the thing was settled, at least they would leave him alone. He walked off his irritation, and before he went about the business he had come out for, had ceased to think about Mrs. Headway. He went home at six o’clock, and the servant who admitted him informed him in doing so that Mrs. Dolphin had requested he should be told on his return that she wished to see him in the drawing-room. “It’s

another trap!" he said to himself, instinctively; but, in spite of this reflection, he went upstairs. On entering the apartment in which Mrs. Dolphin was accustomed to sit, he found that she had a visitor. This visitor, who was apparently on the point of departing, was a tall, elderly woman, and the two ladies stood together in the middle of the room.

"I'm so glad you've come back," said Mrs. Dolphin, without meeting her brother's eye. "I want so much to introduce you to Lady Demesne, and I hoped you would come in. Must you really go — won't you stay a little?" she added, turning to her companion; and without waiting for an answer, went on hastily — "I must leave you a moment — excuse me. I will come back!" Before he knew it, Littlemore found himself alone with Lady Demesne, and he understood that, since he had not been willing to go and see her, she had taken upon herself to make an advance. It had the queerest effect, all the same, to see his sister playing the same tricks as Nancy Beck!

"Ah, she must be in a fidget!" he said to himself as he stood before Lady Demesne. She looked delicate and modest, even timid, as far as a tall, serene woman who carried her head very well could look so; and she was such a different type from Mrs. Headway that his present vision of Nancy's triumph gave her by contrast something of the dignity of the vanquished. It made him feel sorry for her. She lost no time; she went straight to the point. She

evidently felt that in the situation in which she had placed herself, her only advantage could consist in being simple and business-like.

"I'm so glad to see you for a moment. I wish so much to ask you if you can give me any information about a person you know and about whom I have been in correspondence with Mrs. Dolphin. I mean Mrs. Headway."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Littlemore.

"No, I thank you. I have only a moment."

"May I ask you why you make this inquiry?"

"Of course I must give you my reason. I am afraid my son will marry her."

Littlemore was puzzled for a moment; then he felt sure that she was not yet aware of the fact imparted to him in Mrs. Headway's note. "You don't like her?" he said, exaggerating in spite of himself the interrogative inflexion.

"Not at all," said Lady Demesne, smiling and looking at him. Her smile was gentle, without rancor; Littlemore thought it almost beautiful.

"What would you like me to say?" he asked.

"Whether you think her respectable."

"What good will that do you? How can it possibly affect the event?"

"It will do me no good, of course, if your opinion is favorable. But if you tell me it is not, I shall be able to say to my son that the one person in London who has known her more than six months thinks her a bad woman."

This epithet, on Lady Demesne's clear lips, evoked no protest from Littlemore. He had suddenly become conscious of the need to utter the simple truth with which he had answered Rupert Waterville's first question at the Théâtre Français. "I don't think Mrs. Headway respectable," he said.

"I was sure you would say that." Lady Demesne seemed to pant a little.

"I can say nothing more — not a word. That's my opinion. I don't think it will help you."

"I think it will. I wished to have it from your own lips. That makes all the difference," said Lady Demesne. "I am exceedingly obliged to you." And she offered him her hand; after which he accompanied her in silence to the door.

He felt no discomfort, no remorse, at what he had said; he only felt relief. Perhaps it was because he believed it would make no difference. It made a difference only in what was at the bottom of all things — his own sense of fitness. He only wished he had remarked to Lady Demesne that Mrs. Headway would probably make her son a capital wife. But that, at least, would make no difference. He requested his sister, who had wondered greatly at the brevity of his interview with Lady Demesne, to spare him all questions on this subject; and Mrs. Dolphin went about for some days in the happy faith that there were to be no dreadful Americans in English society compromising her native land.

Her faith, however, was short-lived. Nothing had

made any difference ; it was, perhaps, too late. The London world heard in the first days of July, not that Sir Arthur Demesne was to marry Mrs. Headway, but that the pair had been privately, and it was to be hoped, as regards Mrs. Headway, on this occasion indissolubly, united. Lady Demesne gave neither sign nor sound ; she only retired to the country.

“I think you might have done differently,” said Mrs. Dolphin, very pale, to her brother. “But of course everything will come out now.”

“Yes, and make her more the fashion than ever !” Littlemore answered, with cynical laughter. After his little interview with the elder Lady Demesne, he did not feel himself at liberty to call again upon the younger ; and he never learned—he never even wished to know—whether in the pride of her success she forgave him.

Waterville—it was very strange—was positively scandalized at this success. He held that Mrs. Headway ought never to have been allowed to marry a confiding gentleman ; and he used, in speaking to Littlemore, the same words as Mrs. Dolphin. He thought Littlemore might have done differently.

He spoke with such vehemence that Littlemore looked at him hard—hard enough to make him blush.

“Did you want to marry her yourself ?” his friend

inquired. "My dear fellow, you 're in love with her! That 's what 's the matter with you."

This, however, blushing still more, Waterville indignantly denied. A little later he heard from New York that people were beginning to ask who in the world was Mrs. Headway.

THE PENSION BEAUREPAS.

THE PENSION BEAUREPAS.



I.

I WAS not rich — on the contrary ; and I had been told the Pension Beaurepas was cheap. I had moreover been told that a boarding-house is a capital place for the study of human nature. I had a fancy for a literary career, and a friend of mine had said to me, “ If you mean to write you ought to go and live in a boarding-house ; there is no other such place to pick up material.” I had read something of this kind in a letter addressed by Stendhal to his sister : “ I have a passionate desire to know human nature, and have a great mind to live in a boarding-house, where people cannot conceal their real characters.” I was an admirer of the Chartreuse de Parme, and it appeared to me that one could not do better than follow in the footsteps of its author. I remembered, too, the magnificent boarding-house in Balzac’s *Père Goriot*, — the “ *pension bourgeoise des deux sexes et autres*,” kept by Madame Vauquer, née De Conflans. Magnificent, I mean, as a piece of portraiture ; the establishment, as an establishment, was certainly sordid

enough, and I hoped for better things from the Pension Beaurepas. This institution was one of the most esteemed in Geneva, and, standing in a little garden of its own, not far from the lake, had a very homely, comfortable, sociable aspect. The regular entrance was, as one might say, at the back, which looked upon the street, or rather upon a little *place*, adorned like every place in Geneva, great or small, with a fountain. This fact was not prepossessing, for on crossing the threshold you found yourself more or less in the kitchen, encompassed with culinary odors. This, however, was no great matter, for at the Pension Beaurepas there was no attempt at gentility or at concealment of the domestic machinery. The latter was of a very simple sort. Madame Beaurepas was an excellent little old woman, — she was very far advanced in life, and had been keeping a pension for forty years, — whose only faults were that she was slightly deaf, that she was fond of a surreptitious pinch of snuff, and that, at the age of seventy-three, she wore flowers in her cap. There was a tradition in the house that she was not so deaf as she pretended; that she feigned this infirmity in order to possess herself of the secrets of her lodgers. But I never subscribed to this theory; I am convinced that Madame Beaurepas had outlived the period of indiscreet curiosity. She was a philosopher, on a matter-of-fact basis; she had been having lodgers for forty years, and all that she asked of them was that they should pay their bills, make use of the door-mat, and

fold their napkins. She cared very little for their secrets. "J'en ai vus de toutes les couleurs," she said to me. She had quite ceased to care for individuals; she cared only for types, for categories. Her large observation had made her acquainted with a great number, and her mind was a complete collection of "heads." She flattered herself that she knew at a glance where to pigeon-hole a new-comer, and if she made any mistakes her deportment never betrayed them. I think that, as regards individuals, she had neither likes nor dislikes; but she was capable of expressing esteem or contempt for a species. She had her own ways, I suppose, of manifesting her approval, but her manner of indicating the reverse was simple and unvarying. "Je trouve que c'est déplacé!" — this exhausted her view of the matter. If one of her inmates had put arsenic into the *pot-au-feu*, I believe Madame Beaurepas would have contented herself with remarking that the proceeding was misplaced. The line of misconduct to which she most objected was an undue assumption of gentility; she had no patience with boarders who gave themselves airs. "When people come *chez moi*, it is not to cut a figure in the world; I have never had that illusion," I remember hearing her say; "and when you pay seven francs a day, *tout compris*, it comprises everything but the right to look down upon the others. But there are people who, the less they pay, the more they take themselves *au sérieux*. My most difficult boarders have always been those who have had the little rooms."

Madame Beaurepas had a niece, a young woman of some forty odd years ; and the two ladies, with the assistance of a couple of thick-waisted, red-armed peasant women, kept the house going. If on your exits and entrances you peeped into the kitchen, it made very little difference ; for Célestine, the cook, had no pretension to be an invisible functionary or to deal in occult methods. She was always at your service, with a grateful grin : she blacked your boots ; she trudged off to fetch a cab ; she would have carried your baggage, if you had allowed her, on her broad little back. She was always tramping in and out, between her kitchen and the fountain in the place, where it often seemed to me that a large part of the preparation for our dinner went forward, — the wringing out of towels and table-cloths, the washing of potatoes and cabbages, the scouring of saucepans and cleansing of water-bottles. You enjoyed, from the door-step, a perpetual back view of Célestine and of her large, loose, woollen ankles, as she craned, from the waist, over into the fountain, and dabbled in her various utensils. This sounds as if life went on in a very make-shift fashion at the Pension Beaurepas, — as if the tone of the establishment were sordid. But such was not at all the case. We were simply very *bourgeois* ; we practised the good old Genevese principle of not sacrificing to appearances. This is an excellent principle — when you have the reality. We had the reality at the Pension Beaurepas : we had it in the shape of soft, short beds, equipped with

fluffy *duvets*; of admirable coffee, served to us in the morning by Célestine in person, as we lay recumbent on these downy couches; of copious, wholesome, succulent dinners, conformable to the best provincial traditions. [For myself, I thought the Pension Beaurepas picturesque, and this, with me, at that time was a great word. I was young and ingenuous; I had just come from America.] I wished to perfect myself in the French tongue, and I innocently believed that French tongues might be found in Swiss mouths. I used to go to lectures at the Academy, and come home with a violent appetite. I always enjoyed my morning walk across the long bridge (there was only one, just there, in those days) which spans the deep blue outgush of the lake, and up the dark, steep streets of the old Calvinistic city. The garden faced this way, toward the lake and the old town; and this was the pleasantest approach to the house. There was a high wall, with a double gate in the middle, flanked by a couple of ancient massive posts; the big rusty *grille* contained some old-fashioned iron-work. The garden was rather mouldy and weedy, tangled and untended, but it contained a little thin-flowing fountain, several green benches, a rickety little table of the same complexion, and three orange-trees, in tubs, which were deposited as effectively as possible in front of the windows of the *salon*.

II.

As commonly happens in boarding-houses, the rustle of petticoats was, at the Pension Beaurepas, the most familiar form of the human tread. There was the usual allotment of economical widows and old maids, and to maintain the balance of the sexes there were only an old Frenchman and a young American. It hardly made the matter easier that the old Frenchman came from Lausanne. He was a native of that estimable town, but he had once spent six months in Paris, he had tasted of the tree of knowledge; he had got beyond Lausanne, whose resources he pronounced inadequate. Lausanne, as he said, "*manquait d'agrémens*." When obliged, for reasons which he never specified, to bring his residence in Paris to a close, he had fallen back on Geneva; he had broken his fall at the Pension Beaurepas. Geneva was, after all, more like Paris, and at a Genevese boarding-house there were sure to be plenty of Americans with whom one could talk about the French metropolis. M. Pigeonneau was a little lean man, with a large, narrow nose, who sat a great deal in the garden, reading with the aid of a large magnifying glass a volume from the *cabinet de lecture*.

One day, a fortnight after my arrival at the Pension Beaurepas, I came back rather earlier than usual from my academic session; it wanted half an hour of the

midday breakfast. I went into the salon with the design of possessing myself of the day's *Galignani* before one of the little English old maids should have removed it to her virginal bower, — a privilege to which Madame Beaurepas frequently alluded as one of the attractions of the establishment. In the salon I found a new-comer, a tall gentleman in a high black hat, whom I immediately recognized as a compatriot. I had often seen him, or his equivalent, in the hotel parlors of my native land. He apparently supposed himself to be at the present moment in a hotel parlor; his hat was on his head, or, rather, half off it, — pushed back from his forehead, and rather suspended than poised. He stood before a table on which old newspapers were scattered, one of which he had taken up and, with his eye-glass on his nose, was holding out at arm's-length. It was that honorable but extremely diminutive sheet, the *Journal de Genève*, a newspaper of about the size of a pocket-handkerchief. As I drew near, looking for my *Galignani*, the tall gentleman gave me, over the top of his eye-glass, a somewhat solemn stare. Presently, however, before I had time to lay my hand on the object of my search, he silently offered me the *Journal de Genève*.

"It appears," he said, "to be the paper of the country."

"Yes," I answered, "I believe it 's the best."

He gazed at it again, still holding it at arm's-length, as if it had been a looking-glass. "Well," he said, "I suppose it 's natural a small country should have

small papers. You could wrap it up, mountains and all, in one of our dailies !”

I found my *Galignani* and went off with it into the garden, where I seated myself on a bench in the shade. Presently I saw the tall gentleman in the hat appear in one of the open windows of the salon, and stand there with his hands in his pockets and his legs a little apart. He looked very much bored, and — I don’t know why — I immediately began to feel sorry for him. He was not at all a picturesque personage ; he looked like a jaded, faded man of business. But after a little he came into the garden and began to stroll about ; and then his restless, unoccupied carriage, and the vague, unacquainted manner in which his eyes wandered over the place, seemed to make it proper that, as an older resident, I should exercise a certain hospitality. I said something to him, and he came and sat down beside me on my bench, clasping one of his long knees in his hands.

“ When is it this big breakfast of theirs comes off ? ” he inquired. “ That ’s what I call it, — the little breakfast and the big breakfast. I never thought I should live to see the time when I should care to eat two breakfasts. But a man ’s glad to do anything, over here.”

“ For myself,” I observed, “ I find plenty to do.”

He turned his head and glanced at me with a dry, deliberate, kind-looking eye. “ You ’re getting used to the life, are you ? ”

“ I like the life very much,” I answered, laughing.

"How long have you tried it?"

"Do you mean in this place?"

"Well, I mean anywhere. It seems to me pretty much the same all over."

"I have been in this house only a fortnight," I said.

"Well, what should you say, from what you have seen?" my companion asked.

"Oh," said I, "you can see all there is immediately. It's very simple."

"Sweet simplicity, eh? I'm afraid my two ladies will find it too simple."

"Everything is very good," I went on. "And Madame Beaurepas is a charming old woman. And then it's very cheap."

"Cheap, is it?" my friend repeated meditatively.

"Does n't it strike you so?" I asked. I thought it very possible he had not inquired the terms. But he appeared not to have heard me; he sat there, clasping his knee and blinking, in a contemplative manner, at the sunshine.

"Are you from the United States, sir?" he presently demanded, turning his head again.

"Yes, sir," I replied, and I mentioned the place of my nativity.

"I presumed," he said, "that you were American, or English. I'm from the United States myself; from New York City. Many of our people here?"

"Not so many as, I believe, there have sometimes been. There are two or three ladies."

"Well," my interlocutor declared, "I am very fond of ladies' society. I think when it's nice there's nothing comes up to it. I've got two ladies here myself; I must make you acquainted with them."

I rejoined that I should be delighted, and I inquired of my friend whether he had been long in Europe.

"Well, it seems precious long," he said, "but my time's not up yet. We have been here fourteen weeks and a half."

"Are you travelling for pleasure?" I asked.

My companion turned his head again and looked at me, — looked at me so long in silence that I at last also turned and met his eyes.

"No, sir," he said, presently. "No, sir," he repeated, after a considerable interval.

"Excuse me," said I, for there was something so solemn in his tone that I feared I had been indiscreet.

He took no notice of my ejaculation; he simply continued to look at me. "I'm travelling," he said, at last, "to please the doctors. They seemed to think they would like it."

"Ah, they sent you abroad for your health."

"They sent me abroad because they were so confoundedly puzzled they didn't know what else to do."

"That's often the best thing," I ventured to remark.

"It was a confession of weakness; they wanted me

to stop plaguing them. They did n't know enough to cure me, and that's the way they thought they would get out of it. I wanted to be cured,—I did n't want to be transported. I had n't done any harm."

I assented to the general proposition of the inefficiency of doctors, and asked my companion if he had been seriously ill.

"I did n't sleep," he said, after some delay.

"Ah, that's very annoying. I suppose you were overworked."

"I did n't eat; I took no interest in my food."

"Well, I hope you both eat and sleep now," I said.

"I could n't hold a pen," my neighbor went on. "I could n't sit still. I could n't walk from my house to the cars,—and it's only a little way. I lost my interest in business."

"You needed a holiday," I observed.

"That's what the doctors said. It was n't so very smart of them. I had been paying strict attention to business for twenty-three years."

"In all that time you have never had a holiday?" I exclaimed, with horror.

My companion waited a little. "Sundays," he said at last.

"No wonder, then, you were out of sorts."

"Well, sir," said my friend, "I should n't have been where I was three years ago if I had spent my time travelling round Europe. I was in a very advantageous position. I did a very large business. I was

considerably interested in lumber." He paused, turned his head, and looked at me a moment. "Have you any business interests yourself?" I answered that I had none, and he went on again, slowly, softly, deliberately. "Well, sir, perhaps you are not aware that business in the United States is not what it was a short time since. Business interests are very insecure. There seems to be a general falling-off. Different parties offer different explanations of the fact, but so far as I am aware none of their observations have set things going again." I ingeniously intimated that if business was dull it was a good time for coming away; whereupon my neighbor threw back his head and stretched his legs a while. "Well, sir, that's one view of the matter, certainly. There's something to be said for that. These things should be looked at all round. That's the ground my wife took. That's the ground," he added in a moment, "that a lady would naturally take," and he gave a little dry laugh.

"You think it's slightly illogical," I remarked.

"Well, sir, the ground I took was that the worse a man's business is, the more it requires looking after. I should n't want to go out to take a walk — not even to go to church — if my house was on fire. My firm is not doing the business it was; it's like a sick child; it wants nursing. What I wanted the doctors to do was to fix me up, so that I could go on at home. I'd have taken anything they'd have given me, and as many times a day. I wanted to be right

there ; I had my reasons ; I have them still. But I came off, all the same," said my friend, with a melancholy smile.

I was a great deal younger than he, but there was something so simple and communicative in his tone, so expressive of a desire to fraternize, and so exempt from any theory of human differences, that I quite forgot his seniority, and found myself offering him paternal advice. "Don't think about all that," said I. "Simply enjoy yourself, amuse yourself, get well. Travel about and see Europe. At the end of a year, by the time you are ready to go home, things will have improved over there, and you will be quite well and happy."

My friend laid his hand on my knee ; he looked at me for some moments, and I thought he was going to say, "You are very young !" But he said presently, "*You* have got used to Europe, any way !"

III.

AT breakfast I encountered his ladies, — his wife and daughter. They were placed, however, at a distance from me, and it was not until the *pensionnaires* had dispersed, and some of them, according to custom, had come out into the garden, that he had an opportunity of making me acquainted with them.

"Will you allow me to introduce you to my daughter ?" he said, moved apparently by a paternal incli-

nation to provide this young lady with social diversion. She was standing, with her mother, in one of the paths, looking about, with no great complacency, as I imagined, at the homely characteristics of the place, and old M. Pigeonneau was hovering near, hesitating apparently between the desire to be urbane and the absence of a pretext. "Mrs. Ruck, — Miss Sophy Ruck," said my friend, leading me up.

Mrs. Ruck was a large, plump, light-colored person, with a smooth, fair face, a somnolent eye, and an elaborate coiffure. Miss Sophy was a girl of one and twenty, very small and very pretty, — what I suppose would have been called a lively brunette. Both of these ladies were attired in black silk dresses, very much trimmed ; they had an air of the highest elegance.

"Do you think highly of this pension ?" inquired Mrs. Ruck, after a few preliminaries.

"It's a little rough, but it seems to me comfortable," I answered.

"Does it take a high rank in Geneva ?" Mrs. Ruck pursued.

"I imagine it enjoys a very fair fame," I said, smiling.

"I should never dream of comparing it to a New York boarding-house," said Mrs. Ruck.

"It's quite a different style," her daughter observed. Miss Ruck had folded her arms ; she was holding her elbows with a pair of white little hands, and she was tapping the ground with a pretty little foot.

"We hardly expected to come to a pension," said Mrs. Ruck. "But we thought we would try; we had heard so much about Swiss pensions. I was saying to Mr. Ruck that I wondered whether this was a favorable specimen. I was afraid we might have made a mistake."

"We knew some people who had been here; they thought everything of Madame Beaurepas," said Miss Sophy. "They said she was a real friend."

"Mr. and Mrs. Parker, — perhaps you have heard her speak of them," Mrs. Ruck pursued.

"Madame Beaurepas has had a great many Americans; she is very fond of Americans," I replied.

"Well, I must say I should think she would be, if she compares them with some others."

["Mother is always comparing," observed Miss Ruck.

"Of course I am always comparing," rejoined the elder lady. "I never had a chance till now; I never knew my privileges.] Give me an American!" And Mrs. Ruck indulged in a little laugh.

"Well, I must say there are some things I like over here," said Miss Sophy, with courage. And indeed I could see that she was a young woman of great decision.

"You like the shops, — that's what you like," her father affirmed.

The young lady addressed herself to me, without heeding this remark: "I suppose you feel quite at home here."

"Oh, he likes it; he has got used to the life!" exclaimed Mr. Ruck.

"I wish you'd teach Mr. Ruck," said his wife. "It seems as if he could n't get used to anything."

"I'm used to you, my dear," the husband retorted, giving me a humorous look.

"He's intensely restless," continued Mrs. Ruck. "That's what made me want to come to a pension. I thought he would settle down more."

"I don't think I *am* used to you, after all," said her husband.

In view of a possible exchange of conjugal repartee I took refuge in conversation with Miss Ruck, who seemed perfectly able to play her part in any colloquy. I learned from this young lady that, with her parents, after visiting the British islands, she had been spending a month in Paris, and that she thought she should have died when she left that city. "I hung out of the carriage, when we left the hotel," said Miss Ruck; "I assure you I did. And mother did, too."

"Out of the other window, I hope," said I.

"Yes, one out of each window," she replied, promptly. "Father had hard work, I can tell you. We had n't half finished; there were ever so many places we wanted to go to."

"Your father insisted on coming away?"

"Yes; after we had been there about a month he said he had enough. He's fearfully restless; he's very much out of health. Mother and I said to him that

if he was restless in Paris he need n't hope for peace anywhere. We don't mean to leave him alone till he takes us back." There was an air of keen resolution in Miss Ruck's pretty face, of lucid apprehension of desirable ends, which made me, as she pronounced these words, direct a glance of covert compassion toward her poor recalcitrant father. He had walked away a little with his wife, and I saw only his back and his stooping, patient-looking shoulders, whose air of acute resignation was thrown into relief by the voluminous tranquillity of Mrs. Ruck. "He will have to take us back in September, any way," the young girl pursued; "he will have to take us back to get some things we have ordered."

"Have you ordered a great many things?" I asked, jocosely.

"Well, I guess we have ordered *some*. Of course we wanted to take advantage of being in Paris,—ladies always do. We have left the principal things till we go back. Of course that is the principal interest for ladies. Mother said she should feel so shabby, if she just passed through. We have promised all the people to be back in September, and I never broke a promise yet. So Mr. Ruck has got to make his plans accordingly."

"And what are his plans?"

"I don't know; he does n't seem able to make any. His great idea was to get to Geneva; but now that he has got here he does n't seem to care. It's the effect of ill health. He used to be so bright; but

now he is quite subdued. It's about time he should improve, anyway. We went out last night to look at the jewellers' windows,—in that street behind the hotel. I had always heard of those jewellers' windows. We saw some lovely things, but it didn't seem to rouse father. He'll get tired of Geneva sooner than he did of Paris."

"Ah," said I, "there are finer things here than the jewellers' windows. We are very near some of the most beautiful scenery in Europe."

"I suppose you mean the mountains. Well, we have seen plenty of mountains at home. We used to go to the mountains every summer. We are familiar enough with the mountains. Aren't we, mother?" the young lady demanded, appealing to Mrs. Ruck, who, with her husband, had drawn near again.

"Aren't we what?" inquired the elder lady.

"Aren't we familiar with the mountains?"

"Well, I hope so," said Mrs. Ruck.

Mr. Ruck, with his hands in his pockets, gave me a sociable wink. "There's nothing much you can tell them!" he said.

The two ladies stood face to face a few moments, surveying each other's garments. "Don't you want to go out?" the young girl at last inquired of her mother.

"Well, I think we had better; we have got to go up to that place."

"To what place?" asked Mr. Ruck.

“To that jeweller’s, — to that big one.”

“They all seemed big enough; they were too big!”
And Mr. Ruck gave me another wink.

“That one where we saw the blue cross,” said his daughter.

“Oh, come, what do you want of that blue cross?”
poor Mr. Ruck demanded.

“She wants to hang it on a black velvet ribbon and tie it round her neck,” said his wife.

“A black velvet ribbon? No, I thank you!” cried the young lady. “Do you suppose I would wear that cross on a black velvet ribbon? On a nice little gold chain, if you please, — a little narrow gold chain, like an old-fashioned watch-chain. That’s the proper thing for that blue cross. I know the sort of chain I mean; I’m going to look for one. When I want a thing,” said Miss Ruck, with decision, “I can generally find it.”

“Look here, Sophy,” her father urged, “you don’t want that blue cross.”

“I do want it, — I happen to want it.” And Sophy glanced at me with a little laugh.

Her laugh, which in itself was pretty, suggested that there were various relations in which one might stand to Miss Ruck; but I think I was conscious of a certain satisfaction in not occupying the paternal one. “Don’t worry the poor child,” said her mother.

“Come on, mother,” said Miss Ruck.

“We are going to look about a little,” explained the elder lady to me, by way of taking leave.

"I know what that means," remarked Mr. Ruck, as his companions moved away. He stood looking at them a moment, while he raised his hand to his head, behind, and stood rubbing it a little, with a movement that displaced his hat. (I may remark in parenthesis that I never saw a hat more easily displaced than Mr. Ruck's.) I supposed he was going to say something querulous, but I was mistaken. Mr. Ruck was unhappy, but he was very good-natured. "Well, they want to pick up something," he said. "That 's the principal interest, for ladies."

IV.

MR. RUCK distinguished me, as the French say. He honored me with his esteem, and, as the days elapsed, with a large portion of his confidence. Sometimes he bored me a little, for the tone of his conversation was not cheerful, tending as it did almost exclusively to a melancholy dirge over the financial prostration of our common country. "No, sir, business in the United States is not what it once was," he found occasion to remark several times a day. "There 's not the same spring, — there 's not the same hopeful feeling. You can see it in all departments." He used to sit by the hour in the little garden of the pension, with a roll of American newspapers in his lap and his high hat pushed back, swinging one of his long legs and reading the *New York Herald*. He

paid a daily visit to the American banker's, on the other side of the Rhône, and remained there a long time, turning over the old papers on the green velvet table in the middle of the Salon des Étrangers and fraternizing with chance compatriots. But in spite of these diversions his time hung heavily upon his hands. I used sometimes to propose to him to take a walk; but he had a mortal horror of pedestrianism, and regarded my own taste for it as a morbid form of activity. "You'll kill yourself, if you don't look out," he said, "walking all over the country. I don't want to walk round that way; I ain't a postman!" Briefly speaking, Mr. Ruck had few resources. His wife and daughter, on the other hand, it was to be supposed, were possessed of a good many that could not be apparent to an unobtrusive young man. They also sat a great deal in the garden or in the salon, side by side, with folded hands, contemplating material objects, and were remarkably independent of most of the usual feminine aids to idleness, — light literature, tapestry, the use of the piano. They were, however, much fonder of locomotion than their companion, and I often met them in the Rue du Rhône and on the quays, loitering in front of the jewellers' windows. They might have had a cavalier in the person of old M. Pigeonneau, who professed a high appreciation of their charms, but who, owing to the absence of a common idiom, was deprived of the pleasures of intimacy. He knew no English, and Mrs. Ruck and her daughter had, as it seemed, an incurable mistrust of

the beautiful tongue which, as the old man endeavored to impress upon them, was pre-eminently the language of conversation.

"They have a *tournure de princesse*, — a *distinction suprême*," he said to me. "One is surprised to find them in a little pension, at seven francs a day."

"Oh, they don't come for economy," I answered. "They must be rich."

"They don't come for my *beaux yeux*, — for mine," said M. Pigeonneau, sadly. "Perhaps it's for yours, young man. Je vous recommande la mère."

I reflected a moment. "They came on account of Mr. Ruck, — because at hotels he's so restless."

M. Pigeonneau gave me a knowing nod. "Of course he is, with such a wife as that! — a *femme superbe*. Madame Ruck is preserved in perfection, — a miraculous *fraîcheur*. I like those large, fair, quiet women; they are often, *dans l'intimité*, the most agreeable. I'll warrant you that at heart Madame Ruck is a finished coquette."

"I rather doubt it," I said.

"You suppose her cold? Ne vous y fiez pas!"

"It is a matter in which I have nothing at stake."

"You young Americans are droll," said M. Pigeonneau; "you never have anything at stake! But the little one, for example; I'll warrant you she's not cold. She is admirably made."

"She is very pretty."

"'She is very pretty!' Vous dites cela d'un ton! When you pay compliments to Mademoiselle Ruck, I hope that's not the way you do it."

"I don't pay compliments to Mademoiselle Ruck."

"Ah, decidedly," said M. Pigeonneau, "you young Americans are droll!"

I should have suspected that these two ladies would not especially commend themselves to Madame Beaurepas; that as a *maîtresse de salon*, which she in some degree aspired to be, she would have found them wanting in a certain flexibility of deportment. But I should have gone quite wrong; Madame Beaurepas had no fault at all to find with her new pensionnaires. "I have no observation whatever to make about them," she said to me one evening. "I see nothing in those ladies which is at all *déplacé*. They don't complain of anything; they don't meddle; they take what's given them; they leave me tranquil. The Americans are often like that. Often, but not always," Madame Beaurepas pursued. "We are to have a specimen to-morrow of a very different sort."

"An American?" I inquired.

"Two *Américaines*, — a mother and a daughter. There are Americans and Americans: when you are *difficiles*, you are more so than any one, and when you have pretensions — ah, *par exemple*, it's serious. I foresee that with this little lady everything will be serious, beginning with her *café au lait*. She has been staying at the Pension Bonrepos, — my concurrent, you know, further up the street; but she is coming away because the coffee is bad. She holds to her coffee, it appears. I don't know what liquid Madame Bonrepos may have invented, but we will

do the best we can for her. Only, I know she will make me *des histoires* about something else. She will demand a new lamp for the salon; *vous allez voir cela*. She wishes to pay but eleven francs a day for herself and her daughter, *tout compris*; and for their eleven francs they expect to be lodged like princesses. But she is very 'lady-like,' — is n't that what you call it in English? Oh, *pour cela*, she is lady-like!"

I caught a glimpse on the morrow of this lady-like person, who was arriving at her new residence as I came in from a walk. She had come in a cab, with her daughter and her luggage; and, with an air of perfect softness and serenity, she was disputing the fare as she stood among her boxes, on the steps. She addressed her cabman in a very English accent, but with extreme precision and correctness: "I wish to be perfectly reasonable, but I don't wish to encourage you in exorbitant demands. With a franc and a half you are sufficiently paid. It is not the custom at Geneva to give a *pour-boire* for so short a drive. I have made inquiries, and I find it is not the custom, even in the best families. I am a stranger, yes, but I always adopt the custom of the native families. I think it my duty toward the natives."

"But I am a native, too, *moi!*" said the cabman, with an angry laugh.

"You seem to me to speak with a German accent," continued the lady. "You are probably from Basel. A franc and a half is sufficient. I see you have left behind the little red bag which I asked you to hold

between your knees ; you will please to go back to the other house and get it. Very well, if you are impolite I will make a complaint of you to-morrow at the administration. Aurora, you will find a pencil in the outer pocket of my embroidered satchel ; please to write down his number, — 87 ; do you see it distinctly ? — in case we should forget it.”

The young lady addressed as “ Aurora ” — a slight, fair girl, holding a large parcel of umbrellas — stood at hand while this allocution went forward, but she apparently gave no heed to it. She stood looking about her, in a listless manner, at the front of the house, at the corridor, at Célestine tucking up her apron in the door-way, at me as I passed in amid the disseminated luggage ; her mother’s parsimonious attitude seeming to produce in Miss Aurora neither sympathy nor embarrassment. At dinner the two ladies were placed on the same side of the table as myself, below Mrs. Ruck and her daughter, my own position being on the right of Mr. Ruck. I had therefore little observation of Mrs. Church, — such I learned to be her name, — but I occasionally heard her soft, distinct voice.

“ White wine, if you please ; we prefer white wine. There is none on the table ? Then you will please to get some, and to remember to place a bottle of it always here, between my daughter and myself.”

“ That lady seems to know what she wants,” said Mr. Ruck, “ and she speaks so I can understand her. I can’t understand every one, over here. I should

like to make that lady's acquaintance. Perhaps she knows what *I* want, too ; it seems hard to find out. But I don't want any of their sour white wine ; that's one of the things I don't want. I expect she'll be an addition to the pension."

Mr. Ruck made the acquaintance of Mrs. Church that evening in the parlor, being presented to her by his wife, who presumed on the rights conferred upon herself by the mutual proximity, at table, of the two ladies. I suspected that in Mrs. Church's view Mrs. Ruck presumed too far. The fugitive from the Pension Bonrepos, as M. Pigeonneau called her, was a little fresh, plump, comely woman, looking less than her age, with a round, bright, serious face. She was very simply and frugally dressed, not at all in the manner of Mr. Ruck's companions, and she had an air of quiet distinction which was an excellent defensive weapon. She exhibited a polite disposition to listen to what Mr. Ruck might have to say, but her manner was equivalent to an intimation that what she valued least in boarding-house life was its social opportunities. She had placed herself near a lamp, after carefully screwing it and turning it up, and she had opened in her lap, with the assistance of a large embroidered marker, an octavo volume which I perceived to be in German. To Mrs. Ruck and her daughter she was evidently a puzzle, with her economical attire and her expensive culture. The two younger ladies, however, had begun to fraternize very freely, and Miss Ruck presently went

wandering out of the room with her arm round the waist of Miss Church. It was a very warm evening; the long windows of the salon stood wide open into the garden, and inspired by the balmy darkness, M. Pigeonneau and Mademoiselle Beaurepas, a most obliging little woman, who lisped and always wore a huge cravat, declared they would organize a *fête*. They engaged in this undertaking, and the *fête* developed itself, consisting of half a dozen red paper lanterns, hung about on the trees, and of several glasses of *sirap*, carried on a tray by the stout-armed Célestine. As the festival deepened to its climax I went out into the garden, where M. Pigeonneau was master of ceremonies.

“But where are those charming young ladies,” he cried, “Miss Ruck and the new-comer, *l’aimable transfuge*? Their absence has been remarked, and they are wanting to the brilliancy of the occasion. *Voyez*, I have selected a glass of syrup—a generous glass—for Mademoiselle Ruck, and I advise you, my young friend, if you wish to make a good impression, to put aside one which you may offer to the other young lady. What is her name? Miss Church. I see; it’s a singular name. There is a church in which I would willingly worship!”

Mr. Ruck presently came out of the salon, having concluded his interview with Mrs. Church. Through the open window I saw the latter lady sitting under the lamp with her German octavo, while Mrs. Ruck, established, empty-handed, in an arm-chair near her, gazed at her with an air of fascination.

“Well, I told you she would know what I want,” said Mr. Ruck. “She says I want to go up to Appenzell, wherever that is; that I want to drink whey and live in a high latitude — what did she call it? — a high altitude. She seemed to think we ought to leave for Appenzell to-morrow; she’d got it all fixed. She says this ain’t a high enough lat— a high enough altitude. And she says I must n’t go too high, either; that would be just as bad; she seems to know just the right figure. She says she’ll give me a list of the hotels where we must stop, on the way to Appenzell. I asked her if she did n’t want to go with us, but she says she’d rather sit still and read. I expect she’s a big reader.”

The daughter of this accomplished woman now reappeared, in company with Miss Ruck, with whom she had been strolling through the outlying parts of the garden.

“Well,” said Miss Ruck, glancing at the red paper lanterns, “are they trying to stick the flower-pots into the trees?”

“It’s an illumination in honor of our arrival,” the other young girl rejoined. “It’s a triumph over Madame Bonrepos.”

“Meanwhile, at the Pension Bonrepos,” I ventured to suggest, “they have put out their lights; they are sitting in darkness, lamenting your departure.”

She looked at me, smiling; she was standing in the light that came from the house. M. Pigeonneau, meanwhile, who had been awaiting his chance,

advanced to Miss Ruck with his glass of syrup. "I have kept it for you, mademoiselle," he said; "I have jealously guarded it. It is very delicious!"

Miss Ruck looked at him and his syrup, without making any motion to take the glass. "Well, I guess it's sour," she said in a moment, and she gave a little shake of her head.

M. Pigeonneau stood staring, with his syrup in his hand; then he slowly turned away. He looked about at the rest of us, as if to appeal from Miss Ruck's insensibility, and went to deposit his rejected tribute on a bench.

"Won't you give it to me?" asked Miss Church, in faultless French. "J'adore le sirop, moi."

M. Pigeonneau came back with alacrity, and presented the glass with a very low bow. "I adore good manners," murmured the old man.

∟ This incident caused me to look at Miss Church with quickened interest. She was not strikingly pretty, but in her charming, irregular face there was something brilliant and ardent. ∟ Like her mother, she was very simply dressed.

"She wants to go to America, and her mother won't let her," said Miss Sophy to me, explaining her companion's situation.

"I am very sorry — for America," I answered, laughing.

"Well, I don't want to say anything against your mother, but I think it's shameful," Miss Ruck pursued.

"Mamma has very good reasons ; she will tell you them all."

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to hear them," said Miss Ruck. "You have got a right to go to your own country ; every one has a right to go to their own country."

"Mamma is not very patriotic," said Aurora Church, smiling.

"Well, I call that dreadful," her companion declared. "I have heard that there are some Americans like that, but I never believed it."

"There are all sorts of Americans," I said, laughing.

"Aurora's one of the right sort," rejoined Miss Ruck, who had apparently become very intimate with her new friend.

"Are you very patriotic?" I asked of the young girl.

"She's right down homesick," said Miss Sophy ; "she's dying to go. If I were you my mother would have to take me."

"Mamma is going to take me to Dresden."

"Well, I declare I never heard of anything so dreadful!" cried Miss Ruck. "It's like something in a story."

"I never heard there was anything very dreadful in Dresden," I interposed.

Miss Ruck looked at me a moment. "Well, I don't believe *you* are a good American," she replied, "and I never supposed you were. You had better go in there and talk to Mrs. Church."

"Dresden is really very nice, is n't it?" I asked of her companion.

"It is n't nice if you happen to prefer New York," said Miss Sophy. "Miss Church prefers New York. Tell him you are dying to see New York; it will make him angry," she went on.

"I have no desire to make him angry," said Aurora, smiling.

"It is only Miss Ruck who can do that," I rejoined. "Have you been a long time in Europe?"

"Always."

"I call that wicked!" Miss Sophy declared.

"You might be in a worse place," I continued. "I find Europe very interesting."

Miss Ruck gave a little laugh. "I was saying that you wanted to pass for a European."

"Yes, I want to pass for a Dalmatian."

Miss Ruck looked at me a moment. "Well, you had better not come home," she said. "No one will speak to you."

"Were you born in these countries?" I asked of her companion.

"Oh, no; I came to Europe when I was a small child. But I remember America a little, and it seems delightful."

"Wait till you see it again. It's just too lovely," said Miss Sophy.

"It's the grandest country in the world," I added.

Miss Ruck began to toss her head. "Come away, my dear," she said. "If there's a creature I despise

it's a man that tries to say funny things about his own country."

"Don't you think one can be tired of Europe?" Aurora asked, lingering.

"Possibly, — after many years."

"Father was tired of it after three weeks," said Miss Ruck.

"I have been here sixteen years," her friend went on, looking at me with a charming intentness, as if she had a purpose in speaking. "It used to be for my education. I don't know what it's for now."

"She's beautifully educated," said Miss Ruck. "She knows four languages."

"I am not very sure that I know English."

"You should go to Boston!" cried Miss Sophy. "They speak splendidly in Boston."

"C'est mon rêve," said Aurora, still looking at me.

"Have you been all over Europe," I asked, — "in all the different countries?"

She hesitated a moment. "Everywhere that there's a pension. Mamma is devoted to pensions. We have lived, at one time or another, in every pension in Europe."

"Well, I should think you had seen about enough," said Miss Ruck.

"It's a delightful way of seeing Europe," Aurora rejoined, with her brilliant smile. "You may imagine how it has attached me to the different countries. I have such charming souvenirs! There is a pension awaiting us now at Dresden, — eight francs

a day, without wine. That's rather dear. Mamma means to make them give us wine. Mamma is a great authority on pensions; she is known, that way, all over Europe. Last winter we were in Italy, and she discovered one at Piacenza, — four francs a day. We made economies."

"Your mother does n't seem to mingle much," observed Miss Ruck, glancing through the window at the scholastic attitude of Mrs. Church.

"No, she does n't mingle, except in the native society. Though she lives in pensions, she detests them."

"Why does she live in them, then?" asked Miss Sophy, rather resentfully.

"Oh, because we are so poor; it's the cheapest way to live. We have tried having a cook, but the cook always steals. Mamma used to set me to watch her; that's the way I passed my *jeunesse*, — my *belle jeunesse*. We are frightfully poor," the young girl went on, with the same strange frankness, — a curious mixture of girlish grace and conscious cynicism. "Nous n'avons pas le sou. That's one of the reasons we don't go back to America; mamma says we can't afford to live there."

"Well, any one can see that you're an American girl," Miss Ruck remarked, in a consolatory manner. "I can tell an American girl a mile off. You've got the American style."

"I'm afraid I have n't the American *toilette*," said Aurora, looking at the other's superior splendor.

"Well, your dress was cut in France ; any one can see that."

"Yes," said Aurora, with a laugh, "my dress was cut in France, — at Avranches."

"Well, you 've got a lovely figure, any way," pursued her companion.

"Ah," said the young girl, "at Avranches, too, my figure was admired." And she looked at me askance, with a certain coquetry. But I was an innocent youth, and I only looked back at her, wondering. She was a great deal nicer than Miss Ruck, and yet Miss Ruck would not have said that. "I try to be like an American girl," she continued ; "I do my best, though mamma does n't at all encourage it. I am very patriotic. I try to copy them, though mamma has brought me up *à la française* ; that is, as much as one can in pensions. For instance, I have never been out of the house without mamma ; oh, never, never. But sometimes I despair ; American girls are so wonderfully frank. I can't be frank, like that. I am always afraid. But I do what I can, as you see. Excusez du peu !"

I thought this young lady at least as outspoken as most of her unexpatriated sisters ; there was something almost comical in her despondency. But she had by no means caught, as it seemed to me, the American tone. Whatever her tone was, however, it had a fascination ; it was a singular mixture of refinement and audacity.

The young ladies began to stroll about the garden

again, and I enjoyed their society until M. Pigeonneau's festival came to an end.

V.

MR. RUCK did not take his departure for Appenzell on the morrow, in spite of the eagerness to witness such an event which he had attributed to Mrs. Church. He continued, on the contrary, for many days after, to hang about the garden, to wander up to the banker's and back again, to engage in desultory conversation with his fellow-boarders, and to endeavor to assuage his constitutional restlessness by perusal of the American journals. But on the morrow I had the honor of making Mrs. Church's acquaintance. She came into the salon, after the midday breakfast, with her German octavo under her arm, and she appealed to me for assistance in selecting a quiet corner.

"Would you very kindly," she said, "move that large fauteuil a little more this way? Not the largest; the one with the little cushion. The fauteuils here are very insufficient; I must ask Madame Beaurepas for another. Thank you; a little more to the left, please; that will do. Are you particularly engaged?" she inquired, after she had seated herself. "If not, I should like to have some conversation with you. It is some time since I have met a young American of your — what shall I call it? — your affiliations. I have learned your name from Madame Beaurepas; I think I used to know some of your

people. I don't know what has become of all my friends. I used to have a charming little circle at home, but now I meet no one I know. Don't you think there is a great difference between the people one meets and the people one would like to meet? Fortunately, sometimes," added my interlocutress graciously, "it's quite the same. I suppose you are a specimen, a favorable specimen," she went on, "of young America. Tell me, now, what is young America thinking of in these days of ours? What are its feelings, its opinions, its aspirations? What is its *ideal*?" I had seated myself near Mrs. Church and she had pointed this interrogation with the gaze of her bright little eyes. I felt it embarrassing to be treated as a favorable specimen of young America, and to be summoned to enunciate the mysterious formulas to which she alluded. Observing my hesitation, Mrs. Church clasped her hands on the open page of her book and gave an intense, melancholy smile. "*Has* it an ideal?" she softly asked. "Well, we must talk of this," she went on, without insisting. "Speak, for the present, for yourself simply. Have you come to Europe with any special design?"

"Nothing to boast of," I said. "I am studying a little."

"Ah, I am glad to hear that. You are gathering up a little European culture; that's what we lack, you know, at home. No individual can do much, of course. But you must not be discouraged; every little counts."

"I see that you, at least, are doing your part," I rejoined gallantly, dropping my eyes on my companion's learned volume.

"Yes, I frankly admit that I am fond of study. There is no one, after all, like the Germans. That is, for facts. For opinions I by no means always go with them. I form my opinions myself. I am sorry to say, however," Mrs. Church continued, "that I can hardly pretend to diffuse my acquisitions. I am afraid I am sadly selfish ; I do little to irrigate the soil. I belong — I frankly confess it — to the class of absentees."

"I had the pleasure, last evening," I said, "of making the acquaintance of your daughter. She told me you had been a long time in Europe."

Mrs. Church smiled benignantly. "Can one ever be too long ? We shall never leave it."

"Your daughter won't like that," I said, smiling too.

"Has she been taking you into her confidence ? She is a more sensible young lady than she sometimes appears. I have taken great pains with her ; she is really — I may be permitted to say it — superbly educated."

"She seemed to me a very charming girl," I rejoined. "And I learned that she speaks four languages."

"It is not only that," said Mrs. Church, in a tone which suggested that this might be a very superficial species of culture. "She has made what we call *de*

fortes études,—such as I suppose you are making now. She is familiar with the results of modern science; she keeps pace with the new historical school.”

“Ah,” said I, “she has gone much further than I!”

“You doubtless think I exaggerate, and you force me, therefore, to mention the fact that I am able to speak of such matters with a certain intelligence.”

“That is very evident,” I said. “But your daughter thinks you ought to take her home.” I began to fear, as soon as I had uttered these words, that they savored of treachery to the young lady, but I was reassured by seeing that they produced on her mother’s placid countenance no symptom whatever of irritation.

“My daughter has her little theories,” Mrs. Church observed; “she has, I may say, her illusions. And what wonder! What would youth be without its illusions? Aurora has a theory that she would be happier in New York, in Boston, in Philadelphia, than in one of the charming old cities in which our lot is cast. But she is mistaken, that’s all. We must allow our children their illusions, must we not? But we must watch over them.”

Although she herself seemed proof against discomposure, I found something vaguely irritating in her soft, sweet positiveness.

“American cities,” I said, “are the paradise of young girls.”

"Do you mean," asked Mrs. Church, "that the young girls who come from those places are angels?"

"Yes," I said, resolutely.

"This young lady — what is her odd name? — with whom my daughter has formed a somewhat precipitate acquaintance: is Miss Ruck an angel? But I won't force you to say anything uncivil. It would be too cruel to make a single exception."

"Well," said I, "at any rate, in America young girls have an easier lot. They have much more liberty."

My companion laid her hand for an instant on my arm. "My dear young friend, I know America, I know the conditions of life there, so well. There is perhaps no subject on which I have reflected more than on our national idiosyncrasies."

"I am afraid you don't approve of them," said I, a little brutally.

Brutal indeed my proposition was, for Mrs. Church was not prepared to assent to it in this rough shape. She dropped her eyes on her book, with an air of acute meditation. Then, raising them, "We are very crude," she softly observed, — "we are very crude." Lest even this delicately uttered statement should seem to savor of the vice that she deprecated, she went on to explain: "There are two classes of minds, you know, — those that hold back, and those that push forward. My daughter and I are not pushers; we move with little steps. We like the old, trodden paths; we like the old, old world."

"Ah," said I, "you know what you like ; there is a great virtue in that."

"Yes, we like Europe ; we prefer it. We like the opportunities of Europe ; we like the *rest*. There is so much in that, you know. The world seems to me to be hurrying, pressing forward so fiercely, without knowing where it is going. 'Whither?' I often ask, in my little quiet way. But I have yet to learn that any one can tell me."

"You're a great conservative," I observed, while I wondered whether I myself could answer this inquiry.

Mrs. Church gave me a smile which was equivalent to a confession. "I wish to retain a *little*,—just a little. Surely, we have done so much, we might rest awhile ; we might pause. That is all my feeling,—just to stop a little, to wait ! I have seen so many changes. I wish to draw in, to draw in,—to hold back, to hold back."

"You should n't hold your daughter back !" I answered, laughing and getting up. I got up, not by way of terminating our colloquy, for I perceived Mrs. Church's exposition of her views to be by no means complete, but in order to offer a chair to Miss Aurora, who at this moment drew near. She thanked me and remained standing, but without at first, as I noticed, meeting her mother's eye.

"You have been engaged with your new acquaintance, my dear ?" this lady inquired.

"Yes, mamma dear," said the young girl gently.

“Do you find her very edifying?”

Aurora was silent a moment; then she looked at her mother. “I don’t know, mamma; she is very fresh.”

I ventured to indulge in a respectful laugh. “Your mother has another word for that. But I must not,” I added, “be crude.”

“Ah, vous m’en voulez?” inquired Mrs. Church. “And yet I can’t pretend I said it in jest. I feel it too much. We have been having a little social discussion,” she said to her daughter. “There is still so much to be said! And I wish,” she continued, turning to me, “that I could give you our point of view! Don’t you wish, Aurora, that we could give him our point of view?”

“Yes, mamma,” said Aurora.

“We consider ourselves very fortunate in our point of view, don’t we, dearest?” mamma demanded.

“Very fortunate indeed, mamma.”

“You see we have acquired an insight into European life,” the elder lady pursued. “We have our place at many a European fireside. We find so much to esteem, — so much to enjoy. Do we not, my daughter?”

“So very much, mamma,” the young girl went on, with a sort of inscrutable submissiveness. I wondered at it, it offered so strange a contrast to the mocking freedom of her tone the night before; but while I wondered, I was careful not to let my perplexity take precedence of my good manners.

“I don’t know what you ladies may have found at European firesides,” I said, “but there can be very little doubt what you have left there.”

Mrs. Church got up to acknowledge my compliment. “We have spent some charming hours. And that reminds me that we have just now such an occasion in prospect. We are to call upon some Genevese friends, — the family of the Pasteur Galopin. They are to go with us to the old library at the Hôtel de Ville, where there are some very interesting documents of the period of the Reformation; we are promised a glimpse of some manuscripts of poor Servetus, the antagonist and victim, you know, of Calvin. Here, of course, one can only speak of Calvin under one’s breath, but some day, when we are more private,” and Mrs. Church looked round the room, “I will give you my view of him. I think it has a touch of originality. Aurora is familiar with, are you not, my daughter, familiar with my view of Calvin?”

“Yes, mamma,” said Aurora, with docility, while the two ladies went to prepare for their visit to the Pasteur Galopin.

VI.

“SHE has demanded a new lamp; I told you she would!” This communication was made me by Madame Beaurepas a couple of days later. “And she has asked for a new *tapis de lit*, and she has

requested me to provide Célestine with a pair of light shoes. I told her that, as a general thing, cooks are not shod with satin. That poor Célestine!"

"Mrs. Church may be exacting," I said, "but she is a clever little woman."

"A lady who pays but five francs and a half shouldn't be too clever. C'est déplacé. I don't like the type."

"What type do you call Mrs. Church's?"

"Mon Dieu," said Madame Beaurepas, "c'est une de ces mamans comme vous en avez, qui promènent leur fille."

"She is trying to marry her daughter? I don't think she's of that sort."

But Madame Beaurepas shrewdly held to her idea. "She is trying it in her own way; she does it very quietly. She does n't want an American; she wants a foreigner. And she wants a *mari sérieux*. But she is travelling over Europe in search of one. She would like a magistrate."

"A magistrate?"

"A *gros bonnet* of some kind; a professor or a deputy."

"I am very sorry for the poor girl," I said, laughing.

"You need n't pity her too much; she's a sly thing."

"Ah, for that, no!" I exclaimed. "She's a charming girl."

Madame Beaurepas gave an elderly grin. "She

has hooked you, eh ? But the mother won't have you."

I developed my idea, without heeding this insinuation. "She's a charming girl, but she is a little odd. It's a necessity of her position. She is less submissive to her mother than she has to pretend to be. That's in self-defence ; it's to make her life possible."

"She wishes to get away from her mother," continued Madame Beaurepas. "She wishes to *courir les champs*."

"She wishes to go to America, her native country."

"Precisely. And she will certainly go."

"I hope so !" I rejoined.

"Some fine morning — or evening — she will go off with a young man ; probably with a young American."

"Allons donc !" said I, with disgust.

"That will be quite America enough," pursued my cynical hostess. "I have kept a boarding-house for forty years. I have seen that type."

"Have such things as that happened *chez vous* ?" I asked.

"Everything has happened *chez moi*. But nothing has happened more than once. Therefore this won't happen here. It will be at the next place they go to, or the next. Besides, here there is no young American *pour la partie*,—none except you, monsieur. You are susceptible, but you are too reasonable."

"It's lucky for you I am reasonable," I answered. "It's thanks to that fact that you escape a scolding."

One morning, about this time, instead of coming back to breakfast at the pension, after my lectures at the Academy, I went to partake of this meal with a fellow-student, at an ancient eating-house in the collegiate quarter. [On separating from my friend, I took my way along that charming public walk known in Geneva as the Treille, a shady terrace, of immense elevation, overhanging a portion of the lower town. There are spreading trees and well-worn benches, and over the tiles and chimneys of the *ville basse* there is a view of the snow-crested Alps. On the other side, as you turn your back to the view, the promenade is overlooked by a row of tall, sober-faced *hôtels*, the dwellings of the local aristocracy. I was very fond of the place, and often resorted to it to stimulate my sense of the picturesque.] Presently, as I lingered there on this occasion, I became aware that a gentleman was seated not far from where I stood, with his back to the Alpine chain, which this morning was brilliant and distinct, and a newspaper, unfolded, in his lap. He was not reading, however ; he was staring before him in gloomy contemplation. I don't know whether I recognized first the newspaper or its proprietor ; one, in either case, would have helped me to identify the other. One was the *New York Herald* ; the other, of course, was Mr. Ruck. As I drew nearer, he transferred his eyes from the stony, high-featured masks of the gray old houses on the other side of the terrace, and I knew by the expression of his face just how he had been feeling

about these distinguished abodes. He had made up his mind that their proprietors were a dusky, narrow-minded, unsociable company, plunging their roots into a superfluous past. I endeavored, therefore, as I sat down beside him, to suggest something more delectable.

"That's a beautiful view of the Alps," I observed.

"Yes," said Mr. Ruck, without moving, "I've examined it. Fine thing, in its way,—fine thing. Beauties of nature,—that sort of thing. We came up on purpose to look at it."

"Your ladies, then, have been with you?"

"Yes; they're just walking round. They're awfully restless. They keep saying I'm restless, but I'm as quiet as a sleeping child to them. It takes," he added in a moment, dryly, "the form of shopping."

"Are they shopping now?"

"Well, if they ain't, they're trying to. They told me to sit here awhile, and they'd just walk round. I generally know what that means. But that's the principal interest for ladies," he added, retracting his irony. "We thought we'd come up here and see the cathedral; Mrs. Church seemed to think it a dead loss that we should n't see the cathedral, especially as we had n't seen many yet. And I had to come up to the banker's any way. Well, we certainly saw the cathedral. I don't know as we are any the better for it, and I don't know as I should know it again. But we saw it, any way. I don't know as I should want to

go there regularly ; but I suppose it will give us, in conversation, a kind of hold on Mrs. Church, eh ? I guess we want something of that kind. Well," Mr. Ruck continued, "I stopped in at the banker's to see if there was n't something, and they handed me out a *Herald*."

"I hope the *Herald* is full of good news," I said.

"Can't say it is. D — d bad news."

"Political," I inquired, "or commercial ?"

"Oh, hang politics ! It's business, sir. There ain't any business. It's all gone to" — and Mr. Ruck became profane. "Nine failures in one day. What do you say to that ?"

"I hope they have n't injured you," I said.

"Well, they have n't helped me much. So many houses on fire, that's all. If they happen to take place in your own street, they don't increase the value of your property. When mine catches, I suppose they'll write and tell me, — one of these days, when they've got nothing else to do. I didn't get a blessed letter this morning ; I suppose they think I'm having such a good time over here it's a pity to disturb me. If I could attend to business for about half an hour, I'd find out something. But I can't, and it's no use talking. The state of my health was never so unsatisfactory as it was about five o'clock this morning."

"I am very sorry to hear that," I said, "and I recommend you strongly not to think of business."

"I don't," Mr. Ruck replied. "I'm thinking of

cathedrals; I'm thinking of the beauties of nature. Come," he went on, turning round on the bench and leaning his elbow on the parapet, "I'll think of those mountains over there; they *are* pretty, certainly. Can't you get over there?"

"Over where?"

"Over to those hills. Don't they run a train right up?"

"You can go to Chamouni," I said. "You can go to Grindelwald and Zermatt and fifty other places. You can't go by rail, but you can drive."

"All right, we'll drive, — and not in a one-horse concern, either. Yes, Chamouni is one of the places we put down. I hope there are a few nice shops in Chamouni." Mr. Ruck spoke with a certain quickened emphasis, and in a tone more explicitly humorous than he commonly employed. I thought he was excited, and yet he had not the appearance of excitement. He looked like a man who has simply taken, in the face of disaster, a sudden, somewhat imaginative, resolution not to "worry." He presently twisted himself about on his bench again and began to watch for his companions. "Well, they *are* walking round," he resumed; "I guess they've hit on something, somewhere. And they've got a carriage waiting outside of that archway, too. They seem to do a big business in archways here, don't they? They like to have a carriage, to carry home the things, — those ladies of mine. Then they're sure they've got them." The ladies, after this, to do them justice,

were not very long in appearing. They came toward us, from under the archway to which Mr. Ruck had somewhat invidiously alluded, slowly and with a rather exhausted step and expression. My companion looked at them a moment, as they advanced. "They 're tired," he said, softly. "When they 're tired, like that, it's very expensive."

"Well," said Mrs. Ruck, "I'm glad you've had some company." Her husband looked at her, in silence, through narrowed eyelids, and I suspected that this gracious observation on the lady's part was prompted by a restless conscience.

Miss Sophy glanced at me with her little straightforward air of defiance. "It would have been more proper if *we* had had the company. Why did n't you come after us, instead of sitting there?" she asked of Mr. Ruck's companion.

"I was told by your father," I explained, "that you were engaged in sacred rites." Miss Ruck was not gracious, though I doubt whether it was because her conscience was better than her mother's.

"Well, for a gentleman there is nothing so sacred as ladies' society," replied Miss Ruck, in the manner of a person accustomed to giving neat retorts.

"I suppose you refer to the cathedral," said her mother. "Well, I must say, we did n't go back there. I don't know what it may be of a Sunday, but it gave me a chill."

"We discovered the loveliest little lace-shop," observed the young girl, with a serenity that was superior to bravado.

Her father looked at her awhile; then turned about again, leaning on the parapet, and gazed away at the "hills." "Well, it was certainly cheap," said Mrs. Ruck, also contemplating the Alps.

"We are going to Chamouni," said her husband. "You have n't any occasion for lace at Chamouni."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you have decided to go somewhere," rejoined his wife. "I don't want to be a fixture at a boarding-house."

"You can wear lace anywhere," said Miss Ruck, "if you put it on right. That's the great thing, with lace. I don't think they know how to wear lace in Europe. I know how I mean to wear mine; but I mean to keep it till I get home."

Her father transferred his melancholy gaze to her elaborately appointed little person; there was a great deal of very new-looking detail in Miss Ruck's appearance. Then, in a tone of voice quite out of consonance with his facial despondency, "Have you purchased a great deal?" he inquired.

"I have purchased enough for you to make a fuss about."

"He can't make a fuss about that," said Mrs. Ruck.

"Well, you'll see!" declared the young girl, with a little sharp laugh.

But her father went on, in the same tone: "Have you got it in your pocket? Why don't you put it on, — why don't you hang it round you?"

"I'll hang it round *you*, if you don't look out!" cried Miss Sophy.

"Don't you want to show it to this gentleman?" Mr. Ruck continued.

"Mercy, how you do talk about that lace!" said his wife.

"Well, I want to be lively. There's every reason for it; we're going to Chamouni."

"You're restless; that's what's the matter with you." And Mrs. Ruck got up.

"No, I ain't," said her husband. "I never felt so quiet; I feel as peaceful as a little child."

Mrs. Ruck, who had no sense whatever of humor, looked at her daughter and at me. "Well, I hope you'll improve," she said.

"Send in the bills," Mr. Ruck went on, rising to his feet. "Don't hesitate, Sophy. I don't care what you do now. In for a penny, in for a pound."

Miss Ruck joined her mother, with a little toss of her head, and we followed the ladies to the carriage. "In your place," said Miss Sophy to her father, "I wouldn't talk so much about pennies and pounds before strangers."

Poor Mr. Ruck appeared to feel the force of this observation, which, in the consciousness of a man who had never been "mean," could hardly fail to strike a responsive chord. He colored a little, and he was silent; his companions got into their vehicle, the front seat of which was adorned with a large parcel. Mr. Ruck gave the parcel a little poke with his umbrella, and then, turning to me with a rather grimly penitential smile, "After all," he said, "for the ladies that's the principal interest."

VII.

OLD M. Pigeonneau had more than once proposed to me to take a walk, but I had hitherto been unable to respond to so alluring an invitation. It befell, however, one afternoon, that I perceived him going forth upon a desultory stroll, with a certain lonesomeness of demeanor that attracted my sympathy. I hastily overtook him, and passed my hand into his venerable arm, a proceeding which produced in the good old man so jovial a sense of comradeship that he ardently proposed we should bend our steps to the English Garden; no locality less festive was worthy of the occasion. To the English Garden, accordingly, we went; it lay beyond the bridge, beside the lake. It was very pretty and very animated; there was a band playing in the middle, and a considerable number of persons sitting under the small trees, on benches and little chairs, or strolling beside the blue water. We joined the strollers, we observed our companions, and conversed on obvious topics. Some of these last, of course, were the pretty women who embellished the scene, and who, in the light of M. Pigeonneau's comprehensive criticism, appeared surprisingly numerous. He seemed bent upon our making up our minds which was the prettiest, and as this was an innocent game I consented to play at it.

Suddenly M. Pigeonneau stopped, pressing my arm

with the liveliest emotion. "La voilà, la voilà, the prettiest!" he quickly murmured, "coming toward us, in a blue dress, with the other." It was at the other I was looking, for the other, to my surprise, was our interesting fellow-pensioner, the daughter of a vigilant mother. M. Pigeonneau, meanwhile, had redoubled his exclamations; he had recognized Miss Sophy Ruck. "Oh, la belle rencontre, nos aimables convives; the prettiest girl in the world, in effect!"

We immediately greeted and joined the young ladies, who, like ourselves, were walking arm in arm and enjoying the scene.

"I was citing you with admiration to my friend, even before I had recognized you," said M. Pigeonneau to Miss Ruck.

"I don't believe in French compliments," remarked this young lady, presenting her back to the smiling old man.

"Are you and Miss Ruck walking alone?" I asked of her companion. "You had better accept of M. Pigeonneau's gallant protection, and of mine."

Aurora Church had taken her hand out of Miss Ruck's arm; she looked at me, smiling, with her head a little inclined, while, upon her shoulder, she made her open parasol revolve. "Which is most improper, — to walk alone or to walk with gentlemen? I wish to do what is most improper."

"What mysterious logic governs your conduct?" I inquired.

"He thinks you can't understand him when he

talks like that," said Miss Ruck. "But I do understand you, always!"

"So I have always ventured to hope, my dear Miss Ruck."

"Well, if I didn't, it wouldn't be much loss," rejoined this young lady.

"Allons, en marche!" cried M. Pigeonneau, smiling still, and undiscouraged by her inhumanity. "Let us make together the tour of the garden." And he imposed his society upon Miss Ruck with a respectful, elderly grace, which was evidently unable to see anything in reluctance but modesty, and was sublimely conscious of a mission to place modesty at its ease. This ill-assorted couple walked in front, while Aurora Church and I strolled along together.

"I am sure this is more improper," said my companion; "this is delightfully improper. I don't say that as a compliment to you," she added. "I would say it to any man, no matter how stupid."

"Oh, I am very stupid," I answered, "but this does n't seem to me wrong."

"Not for you, no; only for me. There is nothing that a man can do that is wrong, is there? *En morale*, you know, I mean. Ah, yes, he can steal; but I think there is nothing else, is there?"

"I don't know. One does n't know those things until after one has done them. Then one is enlightened."

"And you mean that you have never been enlightened? You make yourself out very good."

"That is better than making one's self out bad, as you do."

The young girl glanced at me a moment, and then, with her charming smile, "That's one of the consequences of a false position."

"Is your position false?" I inquired, smiling too at this large formula.

"Actually so."

"In what way?"

"Oh, in every way. For instance, I have to pretend to be a *jeune fille*. I am not a *jeune fille*; no American girl is a *jeune fille*; an American girl is an intelligent, responsible creature. I have to pretend to be very innocent, but I am not very innocent."

"You don't pretend to be very innocent; you pretend to be — what shall I call it? — very wise."

"That's no pretence. I am wise."

"You are not an American girl," I ventured to observe.

My companion almost stopped, looking at me; there was a little flush in her cheek. "Voilà!" she said. "There's my false position. I want to be an American girl, and I'm not."

"Do you want me to tell you?" I went on. "An American girl wouldn't talk as you are talking now."

"Please tell me," said Aurora Church, with expressive eagerness. "How would she talk?"

"I can't tell you all the things an American girl would say, but I think I can tell you the things she

would n't say. She would n't reason out her conduct, as you seem to me to do."

Aurora gave me the most flattering attention. "I see. She would be simpler. To do very simply things that are not at all simple, — that is the American girl!"

I permitted myself a small explosion of hilarity. "I don't know whether you are a French girl, or what you are," I said, "but you are very witty."

"Ah, you mean that I strike false notes!" cried Aurora Church, sadly. "That's just what I want to avoid. I wish you would always tell me."

The conversational union between Miss Ruck and her neighbor, in front of us, had evidently not become a close one. The young lady suddenly turned round to us with a question: "Don't you want some ice-cream?"

"*She* does n't strike false notes," I murmured.

There was a kind of pavilion or kiosk, which served as a *café*, and at which the delicacies procurable at such an establishment were dispensed. Miss Ruck pointed to the little green tables and chairs which were set out on the gravel; M. Pigeonneau, fluttering with a sense of dissipation, seconded the proposal, and we presently sat down and gave our order to a nimble attendant. I managed again to place myself next to Aurora Church; our companions were on the other side of the table.

My neighbor was delighted with our situation. "This is best of all," she said, "I never believed I

should come to a café with two strange men! Now, you can't persuade me this is n't wrong."

"To make it wrong we ought to see your mother coming down that path."

"Ah, my mother makes everything wrong," said the young girl, attacking with a little spoon in the shape of a spade the apex of a pink ice. And then she returned to her idea of a moment before: "You must promise to tell me—to warn me in some way—whenever I strike a false note. You must give a little cough, like that,—ahem!"

"You will keep me very busy, and people will think I am in a consumption."

"*Voyons*," she continued, "why have you never talked to me more? Is that a false note? Why have n't you been 'attentive'? That's what American girls call it; that's what Miss Ruck calls it."

I assured myself that our companions were out of ear-shot, and that Miss Ruck was much occupied with a large vanilla cream. "Because you are always entwined with that young lady. There is no getting near you."

Aurora looked at her friend while the latter devoted herself to her ice. "You wonder why I like her so much, I suppose. So does mamma; elle s'y perd. I don't like her, particularly; je n'en suis pas folle. But she gives me information; she tells me about America. Mamma has always tried to prevent my knowing anything about it, and I am all the more curious. And then Miss Ruck is very fresh."

"I may not be so fresh as Miss Ruck," I said, "but in future, when you want information, I recommend you to come to me for it."

"Our friend offers to take me to America; she invites me to go back with her, to stay with her. You could n't do that, could you?" And the young girl looked at me a moment. "Bon, a false note! I can see it by your face; you remind me of a *maître de piano*."

"You overdo the character,—the poor American girl," I said. "Are you going to stay with that delightful family?"

"I will go and stay with any one that will take me or ask me. It's a real *nostalgie*. She says that in New York—in Thirty-Seventh Street—I should have the most lovely time."

"I have no doubt you would enjoy it."

"Absolute liberty, to begin with."

"It seems to me you have a certain liberty here," I rejoined.

"Ah, *this*? Oh, I shall pay for this. I shall be punished by mamma, and I shall be lectured by Madame Galopin."

"The wife of the pasteur?"

"His *digne épouse*. Madame Galopin, for mamma, is the incarnation of European opinion. That's what vexes me with mamma, her thinking so much of people like Madame Galopin. Going to see Madame Galopin,—mamma calls that being in European society. European society! I'm so sick of that ex-

pression ; I have heard it since I was six years old. Who is Madame Galopin, — who thinks anything of her here ? She is nobody ; she is perfectly third-rate. If I like America better than mamma, I also know Europe better.”

“ But your mother, certainly,” I objected, a trifle timidly, for my young lady was excited, and had a charming little passion in her eye, — “ your mother has a great many social relations all over the continent.”

“ She thinks so, but half the people don’t care for us. They are not so good as we, and they know it, — I’ll do them that justice, — and they wonder why we should care for them. When we are polite to them, they think the less of us ; there are plenty of people like that. Mamma thinks so much of them simply because they are foreigners. If I could tell you all the dull, stupid, second-rate people I have had to talk to, for no better reason than that they were *de leur pays* ! — Germans, French, Italians, Turks, everything. When I complain, mamma always says that at any rate it’s practice in the language. And she makes so much of the English, too ; I don’t know what that’s practice in.”

Before I had time to suggest a hypothesis, as regards this latter point, I saw something that made me rise, with a certain solemnity, from my chair. This was nothing less than the neat little figure of Mrs. Church — a perfect model of the *femme comme il faut* — approaching our table with an impatient

step, and followed most unexpectedly in her advance by the pre-eminent form of Mr. Ruck. She had evidently come in quest of her daughter, and if she had commanded this gentleman's attendance it had been on no softer ground than that of his unenvied pater-nity to her guilty child's accomplice. My movement had given the alarm, and Aurora Church and M. Pigeonneau got up; Miss Ruck alone did not, in the local phrase, *derange* herself. Mrs. Church, beneath her modest little bonnet, looked very serious, but not at all fluttered; she came straight to her daughter, who received her with a smile, and then she looked all round at the rest of us, very fixedly and tranquilly, without bowing. I must do both these ladies the justice to mention that neither of them made the least little "scene."

"I have come for you, dearest," said the mother.

"Yes, dear mamma."

"Come for you — come for you," Mrs. Church repeated, looking down at the relics of our little feast. "I was obliged to ask Mr. Ruck's assistance. I was puzzled; I thought a long time."

"Well, Mrs. Church, I was glad to see you puzzled once in your life!" said Mr. Ruck, with friendly jocosity. "But you came pretty straight, for all that. I had hard work to keep up with you."

"We will take a cab, Aurora," Mrs. Church went on, without heeding this pleasantry, — "a closed one. Come, my daughter."

"Yes, dear mamma." The young girl was blush-

ing, yet she was still smiling; she looked round at us all, and, as her eyes met mine, I thought she was beautiful. "Good-by," she said to us. "I have had a *lovely time*."

"We must not linger," said her mother; "it is five o'clock. We are to dine, you know, with Madame Galopin."

"I had quite forgotten," Aurora declared. "That will be charming."

"Do you want me to assist you to carry her back, ma'am?" asked Mr. Ruck.

Mrs. Church hesitated a moment, with her serene little gaze. "Do you prefer, then, to leave your daughter to finish the evening with these gentlemen?"

Mr. Ruck pushed back his hat and scratched the top of his head. "Well, I don't know. How would you like that, Sophy?"

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Sophy, as Mrs. Church marched off with her daughter.

VIII.

I HAD half expected that Mrs. Church would make me feel the weight of her disapproval of my own share in that little act of revelry in the English Garden. But she maintained her claim to being a highly reasonable woman; I could not but admire the justice of this pretension by recognizing my irre-

sponsibility. I had taken her daughter as I found her, which was, according to Mrs. Church's view, in a very equivocal position. The natural instinct of a young man, in such a situation, is not to protest, but to profit; and it was clear to Mrs. Church that I had had nothing to do with Miss Aurora's appearing in public under the insufficient chaperonage of Miss Ruck. Besides, she liked to converse, and she apparently did me the honor to believe that of all the members of the Pension Beaurepas I had the most cultivated understanding. I found her in the salon a couple of evenings after the incident I have just narrated, and I approached her with a view of making my peace with her, if this should prove necessary. But Mrs. Church was as gracious as I could have desired; she put her marker into her book, and folded her plump little hands on the cover. She made no specific allusion to the English Garden; she embarked, rather, upon those general considerations in which her refined intellect was so much at home.

"Always at your studies, Mrs. Church," I ventured to observe.

"Que voulez-vous? To say studies is to say too much; one does n't study in the parlors of a boarding-house. But I do what I can; I have always done what I can. That is all I have ever claimed."

"No one can do more, and you seem to have done a great deal."

"Do you know my secret?" she asked, with an air

of brightening confidence. And she paused a moment before she imparted her secret: "To care only for the *best*! To do the best, to know the best, — to have, to desire, to recognize, only the best. That's what I have always done, in my quiet little way. I have gone through Europe on my devoted little errand, seeking, seeing, heeding, only the best. And it has not been for myself alone; it has been for my daughter. My daughter has had the best. We are not rich, but I can say that."

"She has had you, madam," I rejoined finely.

"Certainly; such as I am, I have been devoted. We have got something everywhere; a little here, a little there. That's the real secret, — to get something everywhere; you always can if you *are* devoted. Sometimes it has been a little music, sometimes a little deeper insight into the history of art; every little counts, you know. Sometimes it has been just a glimpse, a view, a lovely landscape, an impression. We have always been on the lookout. Sometimes it has been a valued friendship, a delightful social tie.")

"Here comes the 'European society,' the poor daughter's bugbear," I said to myself. "Certainly," I remarked aloud, — I admit, rather perversely, — "if you have lived a great deal in pensions, you must have got acquainted with lots of people."

Mrs. Church dropped her eyes a moment, and then, with considerable gravity, "I think the European pension system in many respects remarkable, and in some satisfactory. But of the friendships that we

have formed, few have been contracted in establishments of this kind."

"I am sorry to hear that!" I said, laughing.

"I don't say it for you, though I might say it for some others. We have been interested in European *homes*."

"Oh, I see."

"We have the *entrée* of the old Genevese society. I like its tone. I prefer it to that of Mr. Ruck," added Mrs. Church, calmly; "to that of Mrs. Ruck and Miss Ruck, — of Miss Ruck, especially."

"Ah, the poor Rucks have n't any tone at all," I said. "Don't take them more seriously than they take themselves."

"Tell me this," my companion rejoined: "are they fair examples?"

"Examples of what?"

"Of our American tendencies."

"'Tendencies' is a big word, dear lady; tendencies are difficult to calculate. And you should n't abuse those good Rucks, who have been very kind to your daughter. They have invited her to go and stay with them in Thirty-Seventh Street."

"Aurora has told me. It might be very serious."

"It might be very droll," I said.

"To me," declared Mrs. Church, "it is simply terrible. I think we shall have to leave the Pension Beaurepas. I shall go back to Madame Bonrepos."

"On account of the Rucks?" I asked.

"Pray, why don't they go themselves? I have

given them some excellent addresses, — written down the very hours of the trains. They were going to Appenzell: I thought it was arranged."

"They talk of Chamouni now," I said; "but they are very helpless and undecided."

"I will give them some Chamouni addresses. Mrs. Ruck will need a *chaise à porteurs*; I will give her the name of a man who lets them lower than you get them at the hotels. After that they *must* go."

"Well, I doubt," I observed, "whether Mr. Ruck will ever really be seen on the Mer de Glace, — in a high hat. He's not like you; he does n't value his European privileges. He takes no interest. He regrets Wall Street, acutely. As his wife says, he is very restless, but he has no curiosity about Chamouni. So you must not depend too much on the effect of your addresses."

"Is it a frequent type?" asked Mrs. Church, with an air of self-control.

"I am afraid so. Mr. Ruck is a broken-down man of business. He is broken down in health, and I suspect he is broken down in fortune. He has spent his whole life in buying and selling; he knows how to do nothing else. His wife and daughter have spent their lives, not in selling, but in buying; and they, on their side, know how to do nothing else. To get something in a shop that they can put on their backs, — that is their one idea; they have n't another in their heads. Of course they spend no end of money, and they do it with an implacable persist-

ence, with a mixture of audacity and of cunning. They do it in his teeth and they do it behind his back; the mother protects the daughter, and the daughter eggs on the mother. Between them, they are bleeding him to death."

"Ah, what a picture!" murmured Mrs. Church. "I am afraid they are very — uncultivated."

"I share your fears. They are perfectly ignorant; they have no resources. The vision of fine clothes occupies their whole imagination. They have not an idea — even a worse one — to compete with it. Poor Mr. Ruck, who is extremely good-natured and soft, seems to me a really tragic figure. He is getting bad news every day from home; his business is going to the dogs. He is unable to stop it; he has to stand and watch his fortunes ebb. He has been used to doing things in a big way, and he feels 'mean' if he makes a fuss about bills. So the ladies keep sending them in."

"But have n't they common sense? Don't they know they are ruining themselves?"

"They don't believe it. The duty of an American husband and father is to keep them going. If he asks them how, that's his own affair. So, by way of not being mean, of being a good American husband and father, poor Ruck stands staring at bankruptcy."

Mrs. Church looked at me a moment, in quickened meditation. "Why, if Aurora were to go to stay with them, she might not even be properly fed!"

"I don't, on the whole, recommend," I said, laugh-

ing, "that your daughter should pay a visit to Thirty-Seventh Street."

"Why should I be subjected to such trials, — so sadly *éprouvée*? Why should a daughter of mine like that dreadful girl?"

"Does she like her?"

"Pray, do you mean," asked my companion, softly, "that Aurora is a hypocrite?"

I hesitated a moment. "A little, since you ask me. I think you have forced her to be."

Mrs. Church answered this possibly presumptuous charge with a tranquil, candid exultation: "I never force my daughter!"

"She is nevertheless in a false position," I rejoined. "She hungers and thirsts to go back to her own country; she wants to 'come out' in New York, which is certainly, sociably speaking, the El Dorado of young ladies. She likes any one, for the moment, who will talk to her of that, and serve as a connecting link with her native shores. Miss Ruck performs this agreeable office."

"Your idea is, then, that if she were to go with Miss Ruck to America she would drop her afterwards."

I complimented Mrs. Church upon her logical mind, but I repudiated this cynical supposition. "I can't imagine her — when it should come to the point — embarking with the *famille* Ruck. But I wish she might go, nevertheless."

Mrs. Church shook her head serenely, and smiled

at my inappropriate zeal. "I trust my poor child may never be guilty of so fatal a mistake. She is completely in error; she is wholly unadapted to the peculiar conditions of American life. It would not please her. She would not sympathize. My daughter's ideal is not the ideal of the class of young women to which Miss Ruck belongs. I fear they are very numerous; they give the tone,—they give the tone."

"It is you that are mistaken," I said; "go home for six months and see."

"I have not, unfortunately, the means to make costly experiments. My daughter has had great advantages,—rare advantages,—and I should be very sorry to believe that *au fond* she does not appreciate them. One thing is certain: I must remove her from this pernicious influence. We must part company with this deplorable family. If Mr. Ruck and his ladies cannot be induced to go to Chammouni,—a journey that no traveller with the smallest self-respect would omit,—my daughter and I shall be obliged to retire. We shall go to Dresden."

"To Dresden?"

"The capital of Saxony. I had arranged to go there for the autumn, but it will be simpler to go immediately. There are several works in the gallery with which my daughter has not, I think, sufficiently familiarized herself; it is especially strong in the seventeenth-century schools."

As my companion offered me this information I

perceived Mr. Ruck come lounging in, with his hands in his pockets and his elbows making acute angles. He had his usual anomalous appearance of both seeking and avoiding society, and he wandered obliquely toward Mrs. Church, whose last words he had overheard. "The seventeenth-century schools," he said, slowly, as if he were weighing some very small object in a very large pair of scales. "Now, do you suppose they *had* schools at that period?"

Mrs. Church rose with a good deal of precision, making no answer to this incongruous jest. She clasped her large volume to her neat little bosom, and she fixed a gentle, serious eye upon Mr. Ruck.

"I had a letter this morning from Chamouni," she said.

"Well," replied Mr. Ruck, "I suppose you've got friends all over."

"I have friends at Chamouni, but they are leaving. To their great regret." I had got up, too; I listened to this statement, and I wondered. I am almost ashamed to mention the subject of my agitation. I asked myself whether this was a sudden improvisation consecrated by maternal devotion; but this point has never been elucidated. "They are giving up some charming rooms; perhaps you would like them. I should suggest your telegraphing. The weather is glorious," continued Mrs. Church, "and the highest peaks are now perceived with extraordinary distinctness."

Mr. Ruck listened, as he always listened, respect-

fully. "Well," he said, "I don't know as I want to go up Mount Blank. That's the principal attraction, is n't it?"

"There are many others. I thought I would offer you an — an exceptional opportunity."

"Well," said Mr. Ruck, "you're right down friendly. But I seem to have more opportunities than I know what to do with. I don't seem able to take hold."

"It only needs a little decision," remarked Mrs. Church, with an air which was an admirable example of this virtue. "I wish you good-night, sir." And she moved noiselessly away.

Mr. Ruck, with his long legs apart, stood staring after her; then he transferred his perfectly quiet eyes to me. "Does she own a hotel over there?" he asked. "Has she got any stock in Mount Blank?"

IX.

THE next day Madame Beaurepas handed me, with her own elderly fingers, a missive which proved to be a telegram. After glancing at it, I informed her that it was apparently a signal for my departure; my brother had arrived in England, and proposed to me to meet him there; he had come on business and was to spend but three weeks in Europe. "But my house empties itself!" cried the old woman. "The famille Ruck talks of leaving me, and Madame Church *nous fait la révérence*."

“Mrs. Church is going away?”

“She is packing her trunk; she is a very extraordinary person. Do you know what she asked me this morning? To invent some combination by which the famille Ruck should move away. I informed her that I was not an inventor. That poor famille Ruck! ‘Oblige me by getting rid of them,’ said Madame Church, as she would have asked Célestine to remove a dish of cabbage. She speaks as if the world were made for Madame Church. I intimated to her that if she objected to the company there was a very simple remedy: and at present *elle fait ses paquets*.”

“She really asked you,” I said, “to get the Rucks out of the house?”

“She asked me to tell them that their rooms had been let, three months ago, to another family. She has an *aplomb*!”

Mrs. Church’s *aplomb* caused me considerable diversion; I am not sure that it was not, in some degree, to laugh over it at my leisure that I went out into the garden that evening to smoke a cigar. The night was dark and not particularly balmy, and most of my fellow-pensioners, after dinner, had remained in-doors. A long straight walk conducted from the door of the house to the ancient grille that I have described, and I stood here for some time, looking through the iron bars at the silent, empty streets. The prospect was not entertaining, and I presently turned away. At this moment I saw, in the distance,

the door of the house open and throw a shaft of lamp-light into the darkness. Into the lamp-light there stepped a female figure, who presently closed the door behind her. She disappeared in the dusk of the garden and I had seen her but for an instant, but I remained under the impression that Aurora Church, on the eve of her departure, had come out for a meditative stroll.

I lingered near the gate, keeping the red tip of my cigar turned toward the house, and before long a young lady emerged from among the shadows of the trees and encountered the light of a lamp that stood just outside the gate. It was in fact Aurora Church, but she seemed more bent upon conversation than upon meditation. She stood a moment looking at me, and then she said, —

“Ought I to retire, — to return to the house?”

“If you ought, I should be very sorry to tell you so,” I answered.

“But we are all alone; there is no one else in the garden.”

“It is not the first time that I have been alone with a young lady. I am not at all terrified.”

“Ah, but I?” said the young girl. “I have never been alone” — Then, quickly, she interrupted herself: “Good, there’s another false note!”

“Yes, I am obliged to admit that one is very false.”

She stood looking at me. “I am going away to-morrow; after that there will be no one to tell me.”

“That will matter little,” I presently replied. “Telling you will do no good.”

“Ah, why do you say that?” murmured Aurora Church.

I said it partly because it was true ; but I said it for other reasons, as well, which it was hard to define. Standing there bare-headed, in the night air, in the vague light, this young lady looked extremely interesting ; and the interest of her appearance was not diminished by a suspicion on my own part that she had come into the garden knowing me to be there. I thought her a charming girl, and I felt very sorry for her ; but, as I looked at her, those reflections made to me by Madame Beaurepas on her disposition recurred to me with a certain force. I had professed a contempt for them at the time, but it now came into my head that perhaps this unfortunately situated, this insidiously⁹ mutinous, young creature was looking out for a preserver. She was certainly not a girl to throw herself at a man’s head, but it was possible that in her intense — her almost morbid — desire to put into effect an ideal which was perhaps after all charged with as many fallacies as her mother affirmed, she might do something reckless and irregular, — something in which a sympathetic compatriot, as yet unknown, might find his profit. The image, unshaped though it was, of this sympathetic compatriot filled me with a sort of envy. For some moments I was silent, conscious of these things, and then I answered her question : “Because some things

—some differences— are felt, not learned. To you liberty is not natural; you are like a person who has bought a repeater, and, in his satisfaction, is constantly making it sound. To a real American girl her liberty is a very vulgarly ticking old clock.”

“Ah, you mean, then,” said the poor girl, “that my mother has ruined me?”

“Ruined you?”

“She has so perverted my mind that when I try to be natural I am necessarily inmodest.”

“That again is a false note,” I said, laughing.

She turned away. “I think you are cruel.”

“By no means,” I declared; “because, for my own taste, I prefer you as — as” —

I hesitated, and she turned back. “As what?”

“As you are.”

She looked at me awhile again, and then she said, in a little reasoning voice that reminded me of her mother’s, only that it was conscious and studied, “I was not aware that I am under any particular obligation to please you!” And then she gave a little laugh, quite at variance with her voice.

“Oh, there is no obligation,” I said, “but one has preferences. I am very sorry you are going away.”

“What does it matter to you? You are going yourself.”

“As I am going in a different direction, that makes all the greater separation.”

She answered nothing; she stood looking through

the bars of the tall gate at the empty, dusky street. "This grille is like a cage," she said at last.

"Fortunately, it is a cage that will open." And I laid my hand on the lock.

"Don't open it," and she pressed the gate back. "If you should open it I would go out — and never return."

"Where should you go?"

"To America."

"Straight away?"

"Somehow or other. I would go to the American consul. I would beg him to give me money, — to help me."

I received this assertion without a smile; I was not in a smiling humor. On the contrary, I felt singularly excited, and I kept my hand on the lock of the gate. I believed (or I thought I believed) what my companion said, and I had — absurd as it may appear — an irritated vision of her throwing herself upon consular sympathy. It seemed to me, for a moment, that to pass out of that gate with this yearning, straining young creature would be to pass into some mysterious felicity. If I were only a hero of romance, I would offer, myself, to take her to America.

In a moment more, perhaps, I should have persuaded myself that I was one, but at this juncture I heard a sound that was not romantic. It proved to be the very realistic tread of Célestine, the cook, who stood grinning at us as we turned about from our colloquy.

"I ask *bien pardon*," said Célestine. "The mother of mademoiselle desires that mademoiselle should come in immediately. M. le Pasteur Galopin has come to make his *adieux* to *ces dames*."

Aurora gave me only one glance, but it was a touching one. Then she slowly departed with Célestine.

The next morning, on coming into the garden, I found that Mrs. Church and her daughter had departed. I was informed of this fact by old M. Pigeonneau, who sat there under a tree, having his coffee at a little green table.

"I have nothing to envy you," he said ; "I had the last glimpse of that charming Miss Aurora."

"I had a very late glimpse," I answered, "and it was all I could possibly desire."

"I have always noticed," rejoined M. Pigeonneau, "that your desires are more moderate than mine. *Que voulez-vous ?* I am of the old school. *Je crois que la race se perd.* I regret the departure of that young girl: she had an enchanting smile. *Ce sera une femme d'esprit.* For the mother, I can console myself. I am not sure that *she* was a *femme d'esprit*, though she wished to pass for one. Round, rosy, *potelée*, she yet had not the temperament of her appearance ; she was a *femme austère*. I have often noticed that contradiction in American ladies. You see a plump little woman, with a speaking eye and the contour and complexion of a ripe peach, and if you venture to conduct yourself in the smallest degree in accordance with these *indices*, you discover

a species of Methodist,—of what do you call it?—of Quakeress. On the other hand, you encounter a tall, lean, angular person, without color, without grace, all elbows and knees, and you find it's a nature of the tropics! The women of duty look like coquettes, and the others look like alpenstocks! However, we have still the handsome Madame Ruck,—a real *femme de Rubens, celle-là*. It is very true that to talk to her one must know the Flemish tongue!"

I had determined, in accordance with my brother's telegram, to go away in the afternoon; so that, having various duties to perform, I left M. Pigeonneau to his international comparisons. Among other things, I went in the course of the morning to the banker's, to draw money for my journey, and there I found Mr. Ruck, with a pile of crumpled letters in his lap, his chair tipped back and his eyes gloomily fixed on the fringe of the green plush table-cloth. I timidly expressed the hope that he had got better news from home, whereupon he gave me a look in which, considering his provocation, the absence of irritation was conspicuous.

He took up his letters in his large hand, and crushing them together held it out to me. "That epistolary matter," he said, "is worth about five cents. But I guess," he added, rising, "I have taken it in by this time." When I had drawn my money, I asked him to come and breakfast with me at the little *brasserie*, much favored by students, to which I

used to resort in the old town. "I could n't eat, sir," he said, "I could n't eat. Bad news takes away the appetite. But I guess I'll go with you, so that I need n't go to table down there at the pension. The old woman down there is always accusing me of turning up my nose at her food. Well, I guess I sha'n't turn up my nose at anything now."

We went to the little brasserie, where poor Mr. Ruck made the lightest possible breakfast. But if he ate very little, he talked a great deal; he talked about business, going into a hundred details in which I was quite unable to follow him. His talk was not angry or bitter; it was a long, meditative, melancholy monologue; if it had been a trifle less incoherent, I should almost have called it philosophic. I was very sorry for him; I wanted to do something for him, but the only thing I could do was, when we had breakfasted, to see him safely back to the Pension Beaurepas. We went across the Treille and down the Corraterie, out of which we turned into the Rue du Rhône. In this latter street, as all the world knows, are many of those brilliant jewellers' shops for which Geneva is famous. I always admired their glittering windows, and never passed them without a lingering glance. Even on this occasion, preoccupied as I was with my impending departure and with my companion's troubles, I suffered my eyes to wander along the precious tiers that flashed and twinkled behind the huge, clear plates of glass. Thanks to this inveterate habit, I made a discovery.

In the largest and most brilliant of these establishments I perceived two ladies, seated before the counter with an air of absorption which sufficiently proclaimed their identity. I hoped my companion would not see them, but as we came abreast of the door, a little beyond, we found it open to the warm summer air. Mr. Ruck happened to glance in, and he immediately recognized his wife and daughter. He slowly stopped, looking at them; I wondered what he would do. The salesman was holding up a bracelet before them, on its velvet cushion, and flashing it about in an irresistible manner.

Mr. Ruck said nothing, but he presently went in, and I did the same.

"It will be an opportunity," I remarked, as cheerfully as possible, "for me to bid good-by to the ladies."

They turned round when Mr. Ruck came in, and looked at him without confusion. "Well, you had better go home to breakfast," remarked his wife. Miss Sophy made no remark, but she took the bracelet from the attendant and gazed at it very fixedly. Mr. Ruck seated himself on an empty stool and looked round the shop.

"Well, you have been here before," said his wife; "you were here the first day we came."

Miss Ruck extended the precious object in her hands toward me. "Don't you think that's sweet?" she inquired.

I looked at it a moment. "No, I think it's ugly."

She glanced at me a moment, incredulous. "Well, I don't believe you have any taste."

"Why, sir, it's just lovely," said Mrs. Ruck.

"You'll see it some day on me, any way," her daughter declared.

"No, he won't," said Mr. Ruck quietly.

"It will be his own fault, then," Miss Sophy observed.

"Well, if we are going to Chamouni we want to get something here," said Mrs. Ruck. "We may not have another chance."

Mr. Ruck was still looking round the shop, whistling in a very low tone. "We ain't going to Chamouni. We are going to New York City, straight."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," said Mrs. Ruck. "Don't you suppose we want to take something home?"

"If we are going straight back I must have that bracelet," her daughter declared. "Only I don't want a velvet case; I want a satin case."

"I must bid you good-by," I said to the ladies. "I am leaving Geneva in an hour or two."

"Take a good look at that bracelet, so you'll know it when you see it," said Miss Sophy.

"She's bound to have something," remarked her mother, almost proudly.

Mr. Ruck was still looking round the shop; he was still whistling a little. "I am afraid he is not at all well," I said, softly, to his wife.

She twisted her head a little, and glanced at him.

"Well, I wish he'd improve!" she exclaimed.

"A satin case, and a nice one!" said Miss Ruck to the shopman.

I bade Mr. Ruck good-by. "Don't wait for me," he said, sitting there on his stool, and not meeting my eye. "I've got to see this thing through."

I went back to the Pension Beaurepas, and when, an hour later, I left it with my luggage, the family had not returned.



THE POINT OF VIEW.

THE POINT OF VIEW.



I.

FROM MISS AURORA CHURCH, AT SEA, TO MISS WHITE-
SIDE, IN PARIS.

. . . MY dear child, the bromide of sodium (if that's what you call it) proved perfectly useless. I don't mean that it did me no good, but that I never had occasion to take the bottle out of my bag. It might have done wonders for me if I had needed it; but I did n't, simply because I have been a wonder myself. Will you believe that I have spent the whole voyage on deck, in the most animated conversation and exercise? Twelve times round the deck makes a mile, I believe; and by this measurement I have been walking twenty miles a day. And down to every meal, if you please, where I have displayed the appetite of a fish-wife. Of course the weather has been lovely; so there's no great merit. The wicked old Atlantic has been as blue as the sapphire in my only ring (a rather good one), and as smooth as the slippery floor of Madame Galopin's dining-room. We have been for the last three hours in sight of land, and we are soon to enter the Bay of

New York, which is said to be exquisitely beautiful. But of course you recall it, though they say that everything changes so fast over here. I find I don't remember anything, for my recollections of our voyage to Europe, so many years ago, are exceedingly dim; I only have a painful impression that mamma shut me up for an hour every day in the state-room, and made me learn by heart some religious poem. I was only five years old, and I believe that as a child I was extremely timid; on the other hand, mamma, as you know, was dreadfully severe. She is severe to this day; only I have become indifferent; I have been so pinched and pushed—morally speaking, *bien entendu*. It is true, however, that there are children of five on the vessel to-day who have been extremely conspicuous,—ranging all over the ship, and always under one's feet. Of course they are little compatriots, which means that they are little barbarians. I don't mean that all our compatriots are barbarous; they seem to improve, somehow, after their first communion. I don't know whether it's that ceremony that improves them,—especially as so few of them go in for it; but the women are certainly nicer than the little girls; I mean, of course, in proportion, you know. You warned me not to generalize, and you see I have already begun, before we have arrived. But I suppose there is no harm in it so long as it is favorable. Isn't it favorable when I say that I have had the most lovely time? I have never had so much liberty in my life, and I

have been out alone, as you may say, every day of the voyage. If it is a foretaste of what is to come, I shall take to that very kindly. When I say that I have been out alone, I mean that we have always been two. But we two were alone, so to speak, and it was not like always having mamma, or Madame Galopin, or some lady in the *pension*, or the temporary cook. Mamma has been very poorly ; she is so very well on land, it's a wonder to see her at all taken down. She says, however, that it is n't the being at sea ; it's, on the contrary, approaching the land. She is not in a hurry to arrive ; she says that great disillusionments await us. I did n't know that she had any illusions — she's so stern, so philosophic. She is very serious ; she sits for hours in perfect silence, with her eyes fixed on the horizon. I heard her say yesterday to an English gentleman — a very odd Mr. Antrobus, the only person with whom she converses — that she was afraid she should n't like her native land, and that she should n't like not liking it. But this is a mistake — she will like that immensely (I mean not liking it). If it should prove at all agreeable, mamma will be furious, for that will go against her system. You know all about mamma's system ; I have explained that so often. It goes against her system that we should come back at all ; that was *my* system — I have had at last to invent one ! She consented to come only because she saw that, having no *dot*, I should never marry in Europe ; and I pretended to be immensely pre-

occupied with this idea, in order to make her start. In reality *cela m'est parfaitement égal*. I am only afraid I shall like it too much (I don't mean marriage, of course, but one's native land). Say what you will, it's a charming thing to go out alone, and I have given notice to mamma that I mean to be always *en course*. When I tell her that, she looks at me in the same silence; her eye dilates, and then she slowly closes it. It's as if the sea were affecting her a little, though it's so beautifully calm. I ask her if she will try my bromide, which is there in my bag; but she motions me off, and I begin to walk again, tapping my little boot-soles upon the smooth, clean deck. This allusion to my boot-soles, by the way, is not prompted by vanity; but it's a fact that at sea one's feet and one's shoes assume the most extraordinary importance, so that we should take the precaution to have nice ones. They are all you seem to see, as the people walk about the deck; you get to know them intimately and to dislike some of them so much. I am afraid you will think that I have already broken loose; and for aught I know, I am writing as a *demoiselle bien-élevée* should not write. I don't know whether it's the American air; if it is, all I can say is that the American air is very charming. It makes me impatient and restless, and I sit scribbling here because I am so eager to arrive, and the time passes better if I occupy myself. I am in the saloon, where we have our meals, and opposite to me is a big round port-hole, wide open, to let in

the smell of the land. Every now and then I rise a little and look through it, to see whether we are arriving. I mean in the Bay, you know, for we shall not come up to the city till dark. I don't want to lose the Bay; it appears that it's so wonderful. I don't exactly understand what it contains, except some beautiful islands; but I suppose you will know all about that. It is easy to see that these are the last hours, for all the people about me are writing letters to put into the post as soon as we come up to the dock. I believe they are dreadful at the custom-house, and you will remember how many new things you persuaded mamma that (with my preoccupation of marriage) I should take to this country, where even the prettiest girls are expected not to go unadorned. We ruined ourselves in Paris (that is part of mamma's solemnity); *mais au moins je serai belle!* Moreover, I believe that mamma is prepared to say or to do anything that may be necessary for escaping from their odious duties; as she very justly remarks, she can't afford to be ruined twice. I don't know how one approaches these terrible *douaniers*, but I mean to invent something very charming. I mean to say, "*Voyons, Messieurs*, a young girl like me, brought up in the strictest foreign traditions, kept always in the background by a very superior mother—*la voilà*; you can see for yourself!—what is it possible that she should attempt to smuggle in? Nothing but a few simple relics of her convent!" I won't tell them that my convent

was called the *Magasin du Bon Marché*. Mamma began to scold me three days ago for insisting on so many trunks, and the truth is that, between us, we have not fewer than seven. For relics, that's a good many! We are all writing very long letters—or at least we are writing a great number. There is no news of the Bay as yet. Mr. Antrobus, mamma's friend, opposite to me, is beginning on his ninth. He is an Honorable, and a Member of Parliament; he has written, during the voyage, about a hundred letters, and he seems greatly alarmed at the number of stamps he will have to buy when he arrives. He is full of information; but he has not enough, for he asks as many questions as mamma when she goes to hire apartments. He is going to "look into" various things; he speaks as if they had a little hole for the purpose. He walks almost as much as I, and he has very big shoes. He asks questions even of me, and I tell him again and again that I know nothing about America. But it makes no difference; he always begins again, and, indeed, it is not strange that he should find my ignorance incredible. "Now, how would it be in one of your Southwestern States?"—that's his favorite way of opening conversation. Fancy me giving an account of the Southwestern States! I tell him he had better ask mamma—a little to tease that lady, who knows no more about such places than I. Mr. Antrobus is very big and black; he speaks with a sort of brogue; he has a wife and ten children; he is not

very romantic. But he has lots of letters to people *là-bas* (I forget that we are just arriving), and mamma, who takes an interest in him in spite of his views (which are dreadfully advanced, and not at all like mamma's own), has promised to give him the *entrée* to the best society. I don't know what she knows about the best society over here to-day, for we have not kept up our connections at all, and no one will know (or, I am afraid, care) anything about us. She has an idea that we shall be immensely recognized; but really, except the poor little Rucks, who are bankrupt, and, I am told, in no society at all, I don't know on whom we can count. *C'est égal*. Mamma has an idea that, whether or not we appreciate America ourselves, we shall at least be universally appreciated. It's true that we have begun to be, a little; you would see that by the way that Mr. Cockerel and Mr. Louis Leverett are always inviting me to walk. Both of these gentlemen, who are Americans, have asked leave to call upon me in New York, and I have said, *Mon Dieu, oui*, if it's the custom of the country. Of course I have not dared to tell this to mamma, who flatters herself that we have brought with us in our trunks a complete set of customs of our own, and that we shall only have to shake them out a little and put them on when we arrive. If only the two gentlemen I just spoke of don't call at the same time, I don't think I shall be too much frightened. If they do, on the other hand, I won't answer for it. They have a par-

ticular aversion to each other, and they are ready to fight about poor little me. I am only the pretext, however; for, as Mr. Leverett says, it's really the opposition of temperaments. I hope they won't cut each other's throats, for I am not crazy about either of them. They are very well for the deck of a ship, but I should n't care about them in a *salon*; they are not at all distinguished. They think they are, but they are not; at least, Mr. Louis Leverett does; Mr. Cockerel does n't appear to care so much. They are extremely different (with their opposed temperaments), and each very amusing for a while; but I should get dreadfully tired of passing my life with either. Neither has proposed that, as yet; but it is evidently what they are coming to. It will be in a great measure to spite each other, for I think that *au fond* they don't quite believe in me. If they don't, it's the only point on which they agree. They hate each other awfully; they take such different views. That is, Mr. Cockerel hates Mr. Leverett — he calls him a sickly little ass; he says that his opinions are half affectation, and the other half dyspepsia. Mr. Leverett speaks of Mr. Cockerel as a "strident savage," but he declares he finds him most diverting. He says there is nothing in which we can't find a certain entertainment, if we only look at it in the right way, and that we have no business with either hating or loving; we ought only to strive to understand. To understand is to forgive, he says. That is very pretty, but I don't like the suppression

of our affections, though I have no desire to fix mine upon Mr. Leverett. He is very artistic, and talks like an article in some review. He has lived a great deal in Paris, and Mr. Cockerel says that is what has made him such an idiot. That is not complimentary to you, dear Louisa, and still less to your brilliant brother; for Mr. Cockerel explains that he means it (the bad effect of Paris) chiefly of the men. In fact, he means the bad effect of Europe altogether. This, however, is compromising to mamma; and I am afraid there is no doubt that (from what I have told him) he thinks mamma also an idiot. (I am not responsible, you know, — I have always wanted to go home.) If mamma knew him, which she does n't, for she always closes her eyes when I pass on his arm, she would think him disgusting. Mr. Leverett, however, tells me he is nothing to what we shall see yet. He is from Philadelphia (Mr. Cockerel); he insists that we shall go and see Philadelphia, but mamma says she saw it in 1855, and it was then *affreux*. Mr. Cockerel says that mamma is evidently not familiar with the march of improvement in this country; he speaks of 1855 as if it were a hundred years ago. Mamma says she knows it goes only too fast — it goes so fast that it has time to do nothing well; and then Mr. Cockerel, who, to do him justice, is perfectly good-natured, remarks that she had better wait till she has been ashore and seen the improvements. Mamma rejoins that she sees them from here, the improvements, and that they

give her a sinking of the heart. (This little exchange of ideas is carried on through me; they have never spoken to each other.) Mr. Cockerel, as I say, is extremely good-natured, and he carries out what I have heard said about the men in America being very considerate of the women. They evidently listen to them a great deal; they don't contradict them, but it seems to me that this is rather negative. There is very little gallantry in not contradicting one; and it strikes me that there are some things the men don't express. There are others on the ship whom I've noticed. It's as if they were all one's brothers or one's cousins. But I promised you not to generalize, and perhaps there will be more expression when we arrive. Mr. Cockerel returns to America, after a general tour, with a renewed conviction that this is the only country. I left him on deck an hour ago, looking at the coast-line with an opera-glass, and saying it was the prettiest thing he had seen in all his tour. When I remarked that the coast seemed rather low, he said it would be all the easier to get ashore. Mr. Leverett does n't seem in a hurry to get ashore; he is sitting within sight of me in a corner of the saloon — writing letters, I suppose, but looking, from the way he bites his pen and rolls his eyes about, as if he were composing a sonnet and waiting for a rhyme. Perhaps the sonnet is addressed to me; but I forget that he suppresses the affections! The only person in whom mamma takes much interest is the great French critic, M. Lejaune,

whom we have the honor to carry with us. We have read a few of his works, though mamma disapproves of his tendencies and thinks him a dreadful materialist. We have read them for the style; you know he is one of the new Academicians. He is a Frenchman like any other, except that he is rather more quiet; and he has a gray mustache and the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. He is the first French writer of distinction who has been to America since De Tocqueville; the French, in such matters, are not very enterprising. Also, he has the air of wondering what he is doing *dans cette galère*. He has come with his *beau-frère*, who is an engineer, and is looking after some mines, and he talks with scarcely any one else, as he speaks no English and appears to take for granted that no one speaks French. Mamma would be delighted to assure him of the contrary; she has never conversed with an Academician. She always makes a little vague inclination, with a smile, when he passes her, and he answers with a most respectful bow; but it goes no further, to mamma's disappointment. He is always with the *beau-frère*, a rather untidy, fat, bearded man, — decorated, too, always smoking and looking at the feet of the ladies, whom mamma (though she has very good feet) has not the courage to *aborder*. I believe M. Lejaune is going to write a book about America, and Mr. Leverett says it will be terrible. Mr. Leverett has made his acquaintance, and says M. Lejaune will put him into his book; he says the

movement of the French intellect is superb. As a general thing he does n't care for Academicians, but he thinks M. Lejaune is an exception, he is so living, so personal. I asked Mr. Cockerel what he thought of M. Lejaune's plan of writing a book, and he answered that he did n't see what it mattered to him that a Frenchman the more should make a monkey of himself. I asked him why he had n't written a book about Europe, and he said that, in the first place, Europe is n't worth writing about, and, in the second, if he said what he thought, people would think it was a joke. He said they are very superstitious about Europe over here; he wants people in America to behave as if Europe did n't exist. I told this to Mr. Leverett, and he answered that if Europe did n't exist America would n't, for Europe keeps us alive by buying our corn. He said, also, that the trouble with America in the future will be that she will produce things in such enormous quantities that there won't be enough people in the rest of the world to buy them, and that we shall be left with our productions — most of them very hideous — on our hands. I asked him if he thought corn a hideous production, and he replied that there is nothing more unbeautiful than too much food. I think that to feed the world too well, however, that will be, after all, a *beau rôle*. Of course I don't understand these things, and I don't believe Mr. Leverett does; but Mr. Cockerel seems to know what he is talking about, and he says that America is complete in her-

self. I don't know exactly what he means, but he speaks as if human affairs had somehow moved over to this side of the world. It may be a very good place for them, and Heaven knows I am extremely tired of Europe, which mamma has always insisted so on my appreciating ; but I don't think I like the idea of our being so completely cut off. Mr. Cockerel says it is not we that are cut off, but Europe, and he seems to think that Europe has deserved it somehow. That may be ; our life over there was sometimes extremely tiresome, though mamma says it is now that our real fatigues will begin. I like to abuse those dreadful old countries myself, but I am not sure that I am pleased when others do the same. We had some rather pretty moments there, after all ; and at Piacenza we certainly lived on four francs a day. Mamma is already in a terrible state of mind about the expenses here ; she is frightened by what people on the ship (the few that she has spoken to) have told her. There is one comfort, at any rate — we have spent so much money in coming here that we shall have none left to get away. I am scribbling along, as you see, to occupy me till we get news of the islands. Here comes Mr. Cockerel to bring it. Yes, they are in sight ; he tells me that they are lovelier than ever, and that I must come right up right away. I suppose you will think that I am already beginning to use the language of the country. It is certain that at the end of a month I shall speak nothing else. I have picked up every dialect,

wherever we have travelled; you have heard my Platt-Deutsch and my Neapolitan. But, *voyons un peu* the Bay! I have just called to Mr. Leverett to remind him of the islands. "The islands — the islands? Ah, my dear young lady, I have seen Capri, I have seen Ischia!" Well, so have I, but that does n't prevent . . . (*A little later.*) — I have seen the islands; they are rather queer.

II.

MRS. CHURCH, IN NEW YORK, TO MADAME GALOPIN,
AT GENEVA.

October 17, 1880.

IF I felt far away from you in the middle of that deplorable Atlantic, *chère* Madame, how do I feel now, in the heart of this extraordinary city? We have arrived, — we have arrived, dear friend; but I don't know whether to tell you that I consider that an advantage. If we had been given our choice of coming safely to land or going down to the bottom of the sea, I should doubtless have chosen the former course; for I hold, with your noble husband, and in opposition to the general tendency of modern thought, that our lives are not our own to dispose of, but a sacred trust from a higher power, by whom we shall be held responsible. Nevertheless, if I had foreseen more vividly some of the impressions that awaited me here, I am not sure

that, for my daughter at least, I should not have preferred on the spot to hand in our account. Should I not have been less (rather than more) guilty in presuming to dispose of *her* destiny, than of my own? There is a nice point for dear M. Galopin to settle — one of those points which I have heard him discuss in the pulpit with such elevation. We are safe, however, as I say; by which I mean that we are physically safe. We have taken up the thread of our familiar pension-life, but under strikingly different conditions. We have found a refuge in a boarding-house which has been highly recommended to me, and where the arrangements partake of that barbarous magnificence which in this country is the only alternative from primitive rudeness. The terms, per week, are as magnificent as all the rest. The landlady wears diamond ear-rings; and the drawing-rooms are decorated with marble statues. I should indeed be sorry to let you know how I have allowed myself to be *rançonnée*; and I should be still more sorry that it should come to the ears of any of my good friends in Geneva, who know me less well than you and might judge me more harshly. There is no wine given for dinner, and I have vainly requested the person who conducts the establishment to garnish her table more liberally. She says I may have all the wine I want if I will order it at the merchant's, and settle the matter with him. But I have never, as you know, consented to regard our modest allowance of *cau rougie* as an extra; indeed, I remember that it is

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largely to your excellent advice that I have owed my habit of being firm on this point. There are, however, greater difficulties than the question of what we shall drink for dinner, *chère* Madame. Still, I have never lost courage, and I shall not lose courage now. At the worst, we can re-embark again, and seek repose and refreshment on the shores of your beautiful lake. (There is absolutely no scenery here!) We shall not, perhaps, in that case have achieved what we desired, but we shall at least have made an honorable retreat. What we desire—I know it is just this that puzzles you, dear friend; I don't think you ever really comprehended my motives in taking this formidable step, though you were good enough, and your magnanimous husband was good enough, to press my hand at parting in a way that seemed to say that you would still be with me, even if I was wrong. To be very brief, I wished to put an end to the reclamations of my daughter. Many Americans had assured her that she was wasting her youth in those historic lands, which it was her privilege to see so intimately, and this unfortunate conviction had taken possession of her. "Let me at least see for myself," she used to say; "if I should dislike it over there as much as you promise me, so much the better for you. In that case we will come back and make a new arrangement at Stuttgart." The experiment is a terribly expensive one; but you know that my devotion never has shrunk from an ordeal. There is another point,

moreover, which, from a mother to a mother, it would be affectation not to touch upon. I remember the just satisfaction with which you announced to me the betrothal of your charming Cécile. You know with what earnest care my Aurora has been educated, — how thoroughly she is acquainted with the principal results of modern research. We have always studied together ; we have always enjoyed together. It will perhaps surprise you to hear that she makes these very advantages a reproach to me, — represents them as an injury to herself. “In this country,” she says, “the gentlemen have not those accomplishments ; they care nothing for the results of modern research ; and it will not help a young person to be sought in marriage that she can give an account of the last German theory of Pessimism.” That is possible ; and I have never concealed from her that it was not for this country that I had educated her. If she marries in the United States, it is, of course, my intention that my son-in-law shall accompany us to Europe. But, when she calls my attention more and more to these facts, I feel that we are moving in a different world. This is more and more the country of the many ; the few find less and less place for them ; and the individual — well, the individual has quite ceased to be recognized. He is recognized as a voter, but he is not recognized as a gentleman — still less as a lady. My daughter and I, of course, can only pretend to constitute a *few* ! You know that I have never for a moment remitted my pretensions as

an individual, though, among the agitations of pension-life, I have sometimes needed all my energy to uphold them. "Oh, yes, I may be poor," I have had occasion to say, "I may be unprotected, I may be reserved, I may occupy a small apartment in the *quatrième*, and be unable to scatter unscrupulous bribes among the domestics; but at least I am a *person*, with personal rights." In this country the people have rights, but the person has none. You would have perceived that if you had come with me to make arrangements at this establishment. The very fine lady who condescends to preside over it kept me waiting twenty minutes, and then came sailing in without a word of apology. I had sat very silent, with my eyes on the clock; Aurora amused herself with a false admiration of the room, — a wonderful drawing-room, with magenta curtains, frescoed walls, and photographs of the landlady's friends — as if one cared anything about her friends! When this exalted personage came in, she simply remarked that she had just been trying on a dress — that it took so long to get a skirt to hang. "It seems to take very long, indeed!" I answered. "But I hope the skirt is right at last. You might have sent for us to come up and look at it!" She evidently didn't understand, and when I asked her to show us her rooms, she handed us over to a negro as *dégingandé* as herself. While we looked at them, I heard her sit down to the piano in the drawing-room; she began to sing an air from a comic opera. I began to fear we had gone quite astray; I did n't

know in what house we could be, and was only reassured by seeing a Bible in every room. When we came down our musical hostess expressed no hope that the rooms had pleased us, and seemed quite indifferent to our taking them. She would not consent, moreover, to the least diminution, and was inflexible, as I told you, on the subject of wine. When I pushed this point, she was so good as to observe that she did n't keep a *cabaret*. One is not in the least considered; there is no respect for one's privacy, for one's preferences, for one's reserves. The familiarity is without limits, and I have already made a dozen acquaintances, of whom I know, and wish to know, nothing. Aurora tells me that she is the "belle of the boarding-house." It appears that this is a great distinction. It brings me back to my poor child and her prospects. She takes a very critical view of them herself; she tells me that I have given her a false education, and that no one will marry her to-day. No American will marry her, because she is too much of a foreigner, and no foreigner will marry her, because she is too much of an American. I remind her that scarcely a day passes that a foreigner, usually of distinction, does n't select an American bride, and she answers me that in these cases the young lady is not married for her fine eyes. Not always, I reply; and then she declares that she would marry no foreigner who should not be one of the first of the first. You will say, doubtless, that she should content herself with advantages that have not been

deemed insufficient for Cécile ; but I will not repeat to you the remark she made when I once made use of this argument. You will doubtless be surprised to hear that I have ceased to argue ; but it is time I should tell you that I have at last agreed to let her act for herself. She is to live for three months à l'Américaine, and I am to be a mere spectator. You will feel with me that this is a cruel position for a *cœur de mère*. I count the days till our three months are over, and I know that you will join with me in my prayers. Aurora walks the streets alone. She goes out in the tramway ; a *voiture de place* costs five francs for the least little *course*. (I beseech you not to let it be known that I have sometimes had the weakness . . .) My daughter is sometimes accompanied by a gentleman — by a dozen gentlemen ; she remains out for hours, and her conduct excites no surprise in this establishment. I know but too well the emotions it will excite in your quiet home. If you betray us, *chère* Madame, we are lost ; and why, after all, should any one know of these things in Geneva ? Aurora pretends that she has been able to persuade herself that she does n't care who knows them ; but there is a strange expression in her face, which proves that her conscience is not at rest. I watch her, I let her go, but I sit with my hands clasped. There is a peculiar custom in this country — I should n't know how to express it in Genevese — it is called “being attentive,” and young girls are the object of the attention. It has not necessa-

rily anything to do with projects of marriage, — though it is the privilege only of the unmarried, and though, at the same time (fortunately, and this may surprise you), it has no relation to other projects. It is simply an invention by which young persons of the two sexes pass their time together. How shall I muster courage to tell you that Aurora is now engaged in this *délassement*, in company with several gentlemen? Though it has no relation to marriage, it happily does not exclude it, and marriages have been known to take place in consequence (or in spite) of it. It is true that even in this country a young lady may marry but one husband at a time, whereas she may receive at once the attentions of several gentlemen, who are equally entitled “admirers.” My daughter, then, has admirers to an indefinite number. You will think I am joking, perhaps, when I tell you that I am unable to be exact — I who was formerly *l’exactitude même*. Two of these gentlemen are, to a certain extent, old friends, having been passengers on the steamer which carried us so far from you. One of them, still young, is typical of the American character, but a respectable person, and a lawyer in considerable practice. Every one in this country follows a profession; but it must be admitted that the professions are more highly remunerated than *chez vous*. Mr. Cockerel, even while I write you, is in complete possession of my daughter. He called for her an hour ago in a “boghey,” — a strange, unsafe, rickety vehicle, mounted on enormous

wheels, which holds two persons very near together ; and I watched her from the window take her place at his side. Then he whirled her away, behind two little horses with terribly thin legs ; the whole equipage — and most of all her being in it — was in the most questionable taste. But she will return, and she will return very much as she went. It is the same when she goes down to Mr. Louis Leverett, who has no vehicle, and who merely comes and sits with her in the front *salon*. He has lived a great deal in Europe, and is very fond of the arts, and though I am not sure I agree with him in his views of the relation of art to life and life to art, and in his interpretation of some of the great works that Aurora and I have studied together, he seems to me a sufficiently serious and intelligent young man. I do not regard him as intrinsically dangerous ; but, on the other hand, he offers absolutely no guarantees. I have no means whatever of ascertaining his pecuniary situation. There is a vagueness on these points which is extremely embarrassing, and it never occurs to young men to offer you a reference. In Geneva I should not be at a loss ; I should come to you, *chère Madame*, with my little inquiry, and what you should not be able to tell me would not be worth knowing. But no one in New York can give me the smallest information about the *état de fortune* of Mr. Louis Leverett. It is true that he is a native of Boston, where most of his friends reside ; I cannot, however, go to the expense of a journey to Boston simply to learn,

perhaps, that Mr. Leverett (the young Louis) has an income of five thousand francs. As I say, however, he does not strike me as dangerous. When Aurora comes back to me, after having passed an hour with the young Louis, she says that he has described to her his emotions on visiting the home of Shelley, or discussed some of the differences between the Boston Temperament and that of the Italians of the Renaissance. You will not enter into these *rapprochements*, and I can't blame you. But you won't betray me, *chère Madame* ?

III.

FROM MISS STURDY, AT NEWPORT, TO MRS. DRAPER,
IN FLORENCE.

September 30.

I PROMISED to tell you how I like it, but the truth is, I have gone to and fro so often that I have ceased to like and dislike. Nothing strikes me as unexpected ; I expect everything in its order. Then, too, you know, I am not a critic ; I have no talent for keen analysis, as the magazines say ; I don't go into the reasons of things. It is true I have been for a longer time than usual on the wrong side of the water, and I admit that I feel a little out of training for American life. They are breaking me in very fast, however. I don't mean that they bully me ; I absolutely decline to be bullied. I say what I think, because I believe that I have, on the whole, the

advantage of knowing what I think — when I think anything — which is half the battle. Sometimes, indeed, I think nothing at all. They don't like that over here; they like you to have impressions. That they like these impressions to be favorable appears to me perfectly natural; I don't make a crime to them of that; it seems to me, on the contrary, a very amiable quality. When individuals have it, we call them sympathetic; I don't see why we should n't give nations the same benefit. But there are things I have n't the least desire to have an opinion about. The privilege of indifference is the dearest one we possess, and I hold that intelligent people are known by the way they exercise it. Life is full of rubbish, and we have at least our share of it over here. When you wake up in the morning you find that during the night a cartload has been deposited in your front garden. I decline, however, to have any of it in my premises; there are thousands of things I want to know nothing about. I have outlived the necessity of being hypocritical; I have nothing to gain and everything to lose. When one is fifty years old — single, stout, and red in the face — one has outlived a good many necessities. They tell me over here that my increase of weight is extremely marked, and though they don't tell me that I am coarse, I am sure they think me so. There is very little coarseness here — not quite enough, I think — though there is plenty of vulgarity, which is a very different thing. On the whole, the country is becoming much

more agreeable. It is n't that the people are charming, for that they always were (the best of them, I mean, for it is n't true of the others), but that places and things as well have acquired the art of pleasing. The houses are extremely good, and they look so extraordinarily fresh and clean. European interiors, in comparison, seem musty and gritty. We have a great deal of taste; I should n't wonder if we should end by inventing something pretty; we only need a little time. Of course, as yet, it's all imitation, except, by the way, these piazzas. I am sitting on one now; I am writing to you with my portfolio on my knees. This broad, light *loggia* surrounds the house with a movement as free as the expanded wings of a bird, and the wandering airs come up from the deep sea, which murmurs on the rocks at the end of the lawn. Newport is more charming even than you remember it; like everything else over here, it has improved. It is very exquisite to-day; it is, indeed, I think, in all the world, the only exquisite watering-place, for I detest the whole genus. The crowd has left it now, which makes it all the better, though plenty of talkers remain in these large, light, luxurious houses, which are planted with a kind of Dutch definiteness all over the green carpet of the cliff. This carpet is very neatly laid and wonderfully well swept, and the sea, just at hand, is capable of prodigies of blue. Here and there a pretty woman strolls over one of the lawns, which all touch each other, you know, without hedges or fences; the light looks intense as it plays upon her

brilliant dress ; her large parasol shines like a silver dome. The long lines of the far shores are soft and pure, though they are places that one has n't the least desire to visit. Altogether the effect is very delicate, and anything that is delicate counts immensely over here ; for delicacy, I think, is as rare as coarseness. I am talking to you of the sea, however, without having told you a word of my voyage. It was very comfortable and amusing ; I should like to take another next month. You know I am almost offensively well at sea,—that I breast the weather and brave the storm. We had no storm fortunately, and I had brought with me a supply of light literature ; so I passed nine days on deck in my sea-chair, with my heels up, reading Tauchnitz novels. There was a great lot of people, but no one in particular, save some fifty American girls. You know all about the American girl, however, having been one yourself. They are, on the whole, very nice, but fifty is too many ; there are always too many. There was an inquiring Briton, a radical M.P., by name Mr. Antrobus, who entertained me as much as any one else. He is an excellent man ; I even asked him to come down here and spend a couple of days. He looked rather frightened, till I told him he should n't be alone with me, that the house was my brother's, and that I gave the invitation in his name. He came a week ago ; he goes everywhere ; we have heard of him in a dozen places. The English are very simple, or at least they seem so over here. Their old

measurements and comparisons desert them; they don't know whether it's all a joke, or whether it's too serious by half. We are quicker than they, though we talk so much more slowly. We think fast, and yet we talk as deliberately as if we were speaking a foreign language. They toss off their sentences with an air of easy familiarity with the tongue, and yet they misunderstand two thirds of what people say to them. Perhaps, after all, it is only *our* thoughts they think slowly; they think their own often to a lively tune enough. Mr. Antrobus arrived here at eight o'clock in the morning; I don't know how he managed it; it appears to be his favorite hour; wherever we have heard of him he has come in with the dawn. In England, he would arrive at 5.30 P.M. He asks innumerable questions, but they are easy to answer, for he has a sweet credulity. He made me rather ashamed; he is a better American than so many of us; he takes us more seriously than we take ourselves. He seems to think that an oligarchy of wealth is growing up here, and he advised me to be on my guard against it. I don't know exactly what I can do, but I promised him to look out. He is fearfully energetic; the energy of the people here is nothing to that of the inquiring Briton. If we should devote half the energy to building up our institutions that they devote to obtaining information about them, we should have a very satisfactory country. Mr. Antrobus seemed to think very well of us, which surprised me, on the whole, because,

say what one will, it's not so agreeable as England. It's very horrid that this should be; and it's delightful, when one thinks of it, that some things in England are, after all, so disagreeable. At the same time, Mr. Antrobus appeared to be a good deal preoccupied with our dangers. I don't understand, quite, what they are; they seem to me so few, on a Newport piazza, on this bright, still day. But, after all, what one sees on a Newport piazza is not America; it's the back of Europe! I don't mean to say that I have n't noticed any dangers since my return; there are two or three that seem to me very serious, but they are not those that Mr. Antrobus means. One, for instance, is that we shall cease to speak the English language, which I prefer so much to any other. It's less and less spoken; American is crowding it out. All the children speak American, and as a child's language it's dreadfully rough. It's exclusively in use in the schools; all the magazines and newspapers are in American. Of course, a people of fifty millions, who have invented a new civilization, have a right to a language of their own; that's what they tell me, and I can't quarrel with it. But I wish they had made it as pretty as the mother-tongue, from which, after all, it is more or less derived. We ought to have invented something as noble as our country. They tell me it's more expressive, and yet some admirable things have been said in the Queen's English. There can be no question of the Queen over here, of course, and American no doubt is the music

of the future. Poor dear future, how "expressive" you'll be! For women and children, as I say, it strikes one as very rough; and moreover they don't speak it well, their own though it be. My little nephews, when I first came home, had not gone back to school, and it distressed me to see that, though they are charming children, they had the vocal inflections of little newsboys. My niece is sixteen years old; she has the sweetest nature possible; she is extremely well-bred, and is dressed to perfection. She chatters from morning till night; but it is n't a pleasant sound! These little persons are in the opposite case from so many English girls, who know how to speak, but don't know how to talk. My niece knows how to talk, but does n't know how to speak. *A propos* of the young people, that is our other danger; the young people are eating us up,—there is nothing in America but the young people. The country is made for the rising generation; life is arranged for them; they are the destruction of society. People talk of them, consider them, defer to them, bow down to them. They are always present, and whenever they are present there is an end to everything else. They are often very pretty; and physically, they are wonderfully looked after; they are scoured and brushed, they wear hygienic clothes, they go every week to the dentist's. But the little boys kick your shins, and the little girls offer to slap your face! There is an immense literature entirely addressed to them, in which the kicking of shins and the slapping

of faces is much recommended. As a woman of fifty, I protest. I insist on being judged by my peers. It's too late, however, for several millions of little feet are actively engaged in stamping out conversation, and I don't see how they can long fail to keep it under. The future is theirs; maturity will evidently be at an increasing discount. Longfellow wrote a charming little poem, called "The Children's Hour," but he ought to have called it "The Children's Century." And by children, of course, I don't mean simple infants; I mean everything of less than twenty. The social importance of the young American increases steadily up to that age, and then it suddenly stops. The young girls, of course, are more important than the lads; but the lads are very important too. I am struck with the way they are known and talked about; they are little celebrities; they have reputations and pretensions; they are taken very seriously. As for the young girls, as I said just now, there are too many. You will say, perhaps, that I am jealous of them, with my fifty years and my red face. I don't think so, because I don't suffer; my red face does n't frighten people away, and I always find plenty of talkers. The young girls themselves, I believe, like me very much; and as for me, I delight in the young girls. They are often very pretty; not so pretty as people say in the magazines, but pretty enough. The magazines rather overdo that; they make a mistake. I have seen no great beauties, but the level of prettiness is high, and occasionally one sees a woman

completely handsome. (As a general thing, a pretty person here means a person with a pretty face. The figure is rarely mentioned, though there are several good ones.) The level of prettiness is high, but the level of conversation is low ; that's one of the signs of its being a young ladies' country. There are a good many things young ladies can't talk about ; but think of all the things they can, when they are as clever as most of these. Perhaps one ought to content one's self with that measure, but it's difficult if one has lived for a while by a larger one. This one is decidedly narrow ; I stretch it sometimes till it cracks. Then it is that they call me coarse, which I undoubtedly am, thank Heaven ! People's talk is of course much more *châtiée* over here than in Europe ; I am struck with that wherever I go. There are certain things that are never said at all, certain allusions that are never made. There are no light stories, no *propos risqués*. I don't know exactly what people talk about, for the supply of scandal is small, and it's poor in quality. They don't seem, however, to lack topics. The young girls are always there ; they keep the gates of conversation ; very little passes that is not innocent. I find we do very well without wickedness ; and, for myself, as I take my ease, I don't miss my liberties. You remember what I thought of the tone of your table in Florence, and how surprised you were when I asked you why you allowed such things. You said they were like the courses of the seasons ; one could n't prevent them ;

also that to change the tone of your table you would have to change so many other things. Of course, in your house one never saw a young girl; I was the only spinster, and no one was afraid of me! Of course, too, if talk is more innocent in this country, manners are so, to begin with. The liberty of the young people is the strongest proof of it. The young girls are let loose in the world, and the world gets more good of it than *ces demoiselles* get harm. In your world—excuse me, but you know what I mean—this would n't do at all. Your world is a sad affair, and the young ladies would encounter all sorts of horrors. Over here, considering the way they knock about, they remain wonderfully simple, and the reason is that society protects them instead of setting them traps. There is almost no gallantry, as you understand it; the flirtations are child's play. People have no time for making love; the men, in particular, are extremely busy. I am told that sort of thing consumes hours; I have never had any time for it myself. If the leisure class should increase here considerably, there may possibly be a change; but I doubt it, for the women seem to me in all essentials exceedingly reserved. Great superficial frankness, but an extreme dread of complications. The men strike me as very good fellows. I think that at bottom they are better than the women, who are very subtle, but rather hard. They are not so nice to the men as the men are to them; I mean, of course, in proportion, you know. But women are

not so nice as men, "anyhow," as they say here. The men, of course, are professional, commercial; there are very few gentlemen pure and simple. This personage needs to be very well done, however, to be of great utility; and I suppose you won't pretend that he is always well done in your countries. When he's not, the less of him the better. It's very much the same, however, with the system on which the young girls in this country are brought up. (You see, I have to come back to the young girls.) When it succeeds, they are the most charming possible; when it does n't, the failure is disastrous. If a girl is a very nice girl, the American method brings her to great completeness,—makes all her graces flower; but if she is n't nice, it makes her exceedingly disagreeable,—elaborately and fatally perverts her. In a word, the American girl is rarely negative, and when she is n't a great success she is a great warning. In nineteen cases out of twenty, among the people who know how to live—I won't say what *their* proportion is—the results are highly satisfactory. The girls are not shy, but I don't know why they should be, for there is really nothing here to be afraid of. Manners are very gentle, very humane; the democratic system deprives people of weapons that every one does n't equally possess. No one is formidable; no one is on stilts; no one has great pretensions or any recognized right to be arrogant. I think there is not much wickedness, and there is certainly less cruelty than with you. Every one

can sit; no one is kept standing. One is much less liable to be snubbed, which you will say is a pity. I think it is, to a certain extent; but, on the other hand, folly is less fatuous, in form, than in your countries; and as people generally have fewer revenges to take, there is less need of their being stamped on in advance. The general good nature, the social equality, deprive them of triumphs on the one hand, and of grievances on the other. There is extremely little impertinence; there is almost none. You will say I am describing a terrible society,—a society without great figures or great social prizes. You have hit it, my dear; there are no great figures. (The great prize, of course, in Europe, is the opportunity to be a great figure.) You would miss these things a good deal,—you who delight to contemplate greatness; and my advice to you, of course, is never to come back. You would miss the small people even more than the great; every one is middle-sized, and you can never have that momentary sense of tallness which is so agreeable in Europe. There are no brilliant types; the most important people seem to lack dignity. They are very *bourgeois*; they make little jokes; on occasion they make puns; they have no form; they are too good-natured. The men have no style; the women, who are fidgety and talk too much, have it only in their *coiffure*, where they have it superabundantly. But I console myself with the greater *bonhomie*. Have you ever arrived at an English country-house in the dusk of a winter's day?

Have you ever made a call in London, when you knew nobody but the hostess? People here are more expressive, more demonstrative; and it is a pleasure, when one comes back (if one happens, like me, to be no one in particular), to feel one's social value rise. They attend to you more; they have you on their mind; they talk to you; they listen to you. That is, the men do; the women listen very little—not enough. They interrupt; they talk too much; one feels their presence too much as a sound. I imagine it is partly because their wits are quick, and they think of a good many things to say; not that they always say such wonders. Perfect repose, after all, is not *all* self-control; it is also partly stupidity. American women, however, make too many vague exclamations,—say too many indefinite things. In short, they have a great deal of nature. On the whole, I find very little affectation, though we shall probably have more as we improve. As yet, people have n't the assurance that carries those things off; they know too much about each other. The trouble is that over here we have all been brought up together. You will think this a picture of a dreadfully insipid society; but I hasten to add that it's not all so tame as that. I have been speaking of the people that one meets socially; and these are the smallest part of American life. The others—those one meets on a basis of mere convenience—are much more exciting; they keep one's temper in healthy exercise. I mean the people in the shops, and on the railroads;

the servants, the hackmen, the laborers, every one of whom you buy anything or have occasion to make an inquiry. With them you need all your best manners, for you must always have enough for two. If you think we are *too* democratic, taste a little of American life in these walks, and you will be reassured. This is the region of inequality, and you will find plenty of people to make your courtesy to. You see it from below — the weight of inequality is on your own back. You asked me to tell you about prices; they are simply dreadful.

IV.

FROM THE HONORABLE EDWARD ANTROBUS, M.P., IN
BOSTON, TO THE HONORABLE MRS. ANTROBUS.

October 17.

MY DEAR SUSAN, — I sent you a post-card on the 13th and a native newspaper yesterday; I really have had no time to write. I sent you the newspaper partly because it contained a report — extremely incorrect — of some remarks I made at the meeting of the Association of the Teachers of New England; partly because it is so curious that I thought it would interest you and the children. I cut out some portions which I did n't think it would be well for the children to see; the parts remaining contain the most striking features. Please point out to the children the peculiar orthography, which probably will be

adopted in England by the time they are grown up ; the amusing oddities of expression, &c. Some of them are intentional ; you will have heard of the celebrated American humor, &c. (remind me, by the way, on my return to Thistleton, to give you a few examples of it) ; others are unconscious, and are perhaps on that account the more diverting. Point out to the children the difference (in so far as you are sure that you yourself perceive it). You must excuse me if these lines are not very legible ; I am writing them by the light of a railway-lamp, which rattles above my left ear ; it being only at odd moments that I can find time to look into everything that I wish to. You will say that this is a very odd moment, indeed, when I tell you that I am in bed in a sleeping-car. I occupy the upper berth (I will explain to you the arrangement when I return), while the lower forms the couch — the jolts are fearful — of an unknown female. You will be very anxious for my explanation ; but I assure you that it is the custom of the country. I myself am assured that a lady may travel in this manner all over the Union (the Union of States) without a loss of consideration. In case of her occupying the upper berth I presume it would be different ; but I must make inquiries on this point. Whether it be the fact that a mysterious being of another sex has retired to rest behind the same curtains, or whether it be the swing of the train, which rushes through the air with very much the same movement as the tail of a kite, the situation is,

at any rate, so anomalous that I am unable to sleep. A ventilator is open just over my head, and a lively draught, mingled with a drizzle of cinders, pours in through this ingenious orifice. (I will describe to you its form on my return.) If I had occupied the lower berth I should have had a whole window to myself, and by drawing back the blind (a safe proceeding at the dead of night), I should have been able, by the light of an extraordinarily brilliant moon, to see a little better what I write. The question occurs to me, however, — Would the lady below me in that case have ascended to the upper berth? (You know my old taste for contingent inquiries.) I incline to think (from what I have seen) that she would simply have requested me to evacuate my own couch. (The ladies in this country ask for anything they want.) In this case I suppose I should have had an extensive view of the country, which, from what I saw of it before I turned in (while the lady beneath me was going to bed), offered a rather ragged expanse, dotted with little white wooden houses, which looked in the moonshine like pasteboard boxes. I have been unable to ascertain as precisely as I should wish by whom these modest residences are occupied; for they are too small to be the homes of country gentlemen, there is no peasantry here, and (in New England, for all the corn comes from the far West) there are no yeomen nor farmers. The information that one receives in this country is apt to be rather conflicting, but I am determined to sift the mystery to the bottom. I have

already noted down a multitude of facts bearing upon the points that interest me most,—the operation of the school-boards, the co-education of the sexes, the elevation of the tone of the lower classes, the participation of the latter in political life. Political life, indeed, is almost wholly confined to the lower-middle class, and the upper section of the lower class. In some of the large towns, indeed, the lowest order of all participates considerably,—a very interesting phase, to which I shall give more attention. It is very gratifying to see the taste for public affairs pervading so many social strata; but the indifference of the gentry is a fact not to be lightly considered. It may be objected, indeed, that there are no gentry; and it is very true that I have not yet encountered a character of the type of Lord Bottomley,—a type which I am free to confess I should be sorry to see disappear from our English system, if system it may be called, where so much is the growth of blind and incoherent forces. It is nevertheless obvious that an idle and luxurious class exists in this country, and that it is less exempt than in our own from the reproach of preferring inglorious ease to the furtherance of liberal ideas. It is rapidly increasing, and I am not sure that the indefinite growth of the dilettante spirit, in connection with large and lavishly expended wealth, is an unmixed good, even in a society in which freedom of development has obtained so many interesting triumphs. The fact that this body is not represented in the governing class, is perhaps as

much the result of the jealousy with which it is viewed by the more earnest workers as of its own—I dare not, perhaps, apply a harsher term than—levity. Such, at least, is the impression I have gathered in the Middle States and in New England; in the Southwest, the Northwest, and the far West, it will doubtless be liable to correction. These divisions are probably new to you; but they are the general denomination of large and flourishing communities, with which I hope to make myself at least superficially acquainted. The fatigue of traversing, as I habitually do, three or four hundred miles at a bound, is, of course, considerable; but there is usually much to inquire into by the way. The conductors of the trains, with whom I freely converse, are often men of vigorous and original minds, and even of some social eminence. One of them, a few days ago, gave me a letter of introduction to his brother-in-law, who is president of a Western university. Don't have any fear, therefore, that I am not in the best society! The arrangements for travelling are, as a general thing, extremely ingenious, as you will probably have inferred from what I told you above; but it must at the same time be conceded that some of them are more ingenious than happy. Some of the facilities, with regard to luggage, the transmission of parcels, &c., are doubtless very useful when explained, but I have not yet succeeded in mastering the intricacies. There are, on the other hand, no cabs and no porters, and I have calculated that I have myself carried my *impedi-*

menta — which, you know, are somewhat numerous, and from which I cannot bear to be separated — some seventy or eighty miles. I have sometimes thought it was a great mistake not to bring Plummeridge; he would have been useful on such occasions. On the other hand, the startling question would have presented itself—Who would have carried Plummeridge's portmanteau? He would have been useful, indeed, for brushing and packing my clothes, and getting me my tub; I travel with a large tin one,—there are none to be obtained at the inns,—and the transport of this receptacle often presents the most insoluble difficulties. It is often, too, an object of considerable embarrassment in arriving at private houses, where the servants have less reserve of manner than in England; and, to tell you the truth, I am by no means certain at the present moment that the tub has been placed in the train with me. “On board” the train is the consecrated phrase here; it is an allusion to the tossing and pitching of the concatenation of cars, so similar to that of a vessel in a storm. As I was about to inquire, however, Who would get Plummeridge *his* tub, and attend to his little comforts? We could not very well make our appearance, on coming to stay with people, with *two* of the utensils I have named; though, as regards a single one, I have had the courage, as I may say, of a life-long habit. It would hardly be expected that we should both use the same; though there have been occasions in my travels as to which I see no way of blinking the fact

that Plummeridge would have had to sit down to dinner with me. Such a contingency would completely have unnerved him; and, on the whole, it was doubtless the wiser part to leave him respectfully touching his hat on the tender in the Mersey. No one touches his hat over here, and though it is doubtless the sign of a more advanced social order, I confess that when I see poor Plummeridge again, this familiar little gesture — familiar, I mean, only in the sense of being often seen — will give me a measurable satisfaction. You will see from what I tell you that democracy is not a mere word in this country, and I could give you many more instances of its universal reign. This, however, is what we come here to look at, and, in so far as there seems to be proper occasion, to admire; though I am by no means sure that we can hope to establish within an appreciable time a corresponding change in the somewhat rigid fabric of English manners. I am not even prepared to affirm that such a change is desirable; you know this is one of the points on which I do not as yet see my way to going as far as Lord B——. I have always held that there is a certain social ideal of inequality as well as of equality, and if I have found the people of this country, as a general thing, quite equal to each other, I am not sure that I am prepared to go so far as to say that, as a whole, they are equal to — excuse that dreadful blot! The movement of the train and the precarious nature of the light — it is close to my nose, and most offensive — would, I flatter myself,

long since have got the better of a less resolute diarist! What I was not prepared for was the very considerable body of aristocratic feeling that lurks beneath this republican simplicity. I have on several occasions been made the confidant of these romantic but delusive vagaries, of which the stronghold appears to be the Empire City, — a slang name for New York. I was assured in many quarters that that locality, at least, is ripe for a monarchy, and if one of the Queen's sons would come and talk it over, he would meet with the highest encouragement. This information was given me in strict confidence, with closed doors, as it were; it reminded me a good deal of the dreams of the old Jacobites, when they whispered their messages to the king across the water. I doubt, however, whether these less excusable visionaries will be able to secure the services of a Pretender, for I fear that in such a case he would encounter a still more fatal Culloden. I have given a good deal of time, as I told you, to the educational system, and have visited no fewer than one hundred and forty-three schools and colleges. It is extraordinary, the number of persons who are being educated in this country; and yet, at the same time, the tone of the people is less scholarly than one might expect. A lady, a few days since, described to me her daughter as being always "on the go," which I take to be a jocular way of saying that the young lady was very fond of paying visits. Another person, the wife of a United States senator, informed me that if I should go to Washing-

ton in January, I should be quite "in the swim." I inquired the meaning of the phrase, but her explanation made it rather more than less ambiguous. To say that I am on the go describes very accurately my own situation. I went yesterday to the Pognanuc High School, to hear fifty-seven boys and girls recite in unison a most remarkable ode to the American Flag, and shortly afterward attended a ladies' lunch, at which some eighty or ninety of the sex were present. There was only one individual in trousers — his trousers by the way, though he brought a dozen pair, are getting rather seedy. The men in America do not partake of this meal, at which ladies assemble in large numbers to discuss religious, political, and social topics. These immense female symposia (at which every delicacy is provided) are one of the most striking features of American life, and would seem to prove that men are not so indispensable in the scheme of creation as they sometimes suppose. I have been admitted on the footing of an Englishman — "just to show you some of our bright women," the hostess yesterday remarked. ("Bright" here has the meaning of *intellectual*.) I perceived, indeed, a great many intellectual foreheads. These curious collations are organized according to age. I have also been present as an inquiring stranger at several "girls' lunches," from which married ladies are rigidly excluded, but where the fair revellers are equally numerous and equally bright. There is a good deal I should like to tell you about my study of

the educational question, but my position is somewhat cramped, and I must dismiss it briefly. My leading impression is that the children in this country are better educated than the adults. The position of a child is, on the whole, one of great distinction. There is a popular ballad of which the refrain, if I am not mistaken, is "Make me a child again, just for to-night!" and which seems to express the sentiment of regret for lost privileges. At all events they are a powerful and independent class, and have organs, of immense circulation, in the press. They are often extremely "bright." I have talked with a great many teachers, most of them lady-teachers, as they are called in this country. The phrase does not mean teachers of ladies, as you might suppose, but applies to the sex of the instructress, who often has large classes of young men under her control. I was lately introduced to a young woman of twenty-three, who occupies the chair of Moral Philosophy and Belles-Lettres in a Western college, and who told me with the utmost frankness that she was adored by the undergraduates. This young woman was the daughter of a petty trader in one of the Southwestern States, and had studied at Amanda College, in Missouri, an institution at which young people of the two sexes pursue their education together. She was very pretty and modest, and expressed a great desire to see something of English country-life, in consequence of which I made her promise to come down to Thistleton in the event of her crossing the Atlantic.

She is not the least like Gwendolen or Charlotte, and I am not prepared to say how they would get on with her; the boys would probably do better. Still, I think her acquaintance would be of value to Miss Bumpus, and the two might pass their time very pleasantly in the school-room. I grant you freely that those I have seen here are much less comfortable than the school-room at Thistleton. Has Charlotte, by the way, designed any more texts for the walls? I have been extremely interested in my visit to Philadelphia, where I saw several thousand little red houses with white steps, occupied by intelligent artisans, and arranged (in streets) on the rectangular system. Improved cooking-stoves, rosewood pianos, gas and hot water, æsthetic furniture, and complete sets of the British Essayists. A tramway through every street; every block of equal length; blocks and houses scientifically lettered and numbered. There is absolutely no loss of time, and no need of looking for anything, or, indeed, *at* anything. The mind always on one's object; it is very delightful.

V.

FROM LOUIS LEVERETT, IN BOSTON, TO HARVARD TRE-
MONT, IN PARIS.

November.

THE scales have turned, my sympathetic Harvard, and the beam that has lifted you up has dropped me

again on this terribly hard spot. I am extremely sorry to have missed you in London, but I received your little note, and took due heed of your injunction to let you know how I got on. I don't get on at all, my dear Harvard — I am consumed with the love of the farther shore. I have been so long away that I have dropped out of my place in this little Boston world, and the shallow tides of New England life have closed over it. I am a stranger here, and I find it hard to believe that I ever was a native. It is very hard, very cold, very vacant. I think of your warm, rich Paris; I think of the Boulevard St. Michel on the mild spring evenings. I see the little corner by the window (of the Café de la Jeunesse) where I used to sit; the doors are open, the soft, deep breath of the great city comes in. It is brilliant, yet there is a kind of tone, of body, in the brightness; the mighty murmur of the ripest civilization in the world comes in; the dear old *peuple de Paris*, the most interesting people in the world, pass by. I have a little book in my pocket; it is exquisitely printed, a modern Elzevir. It is a lyric cry from the heart of young France, and is full of the sentiment of form. There is no form here, dear Harvard; I had no idea how little form there was. I don't know what I shall do; I feel so undraped, so uncurtained, so uncushioned; I feel as if I were sitting in the centre of a mighty "reflector." A terrible crude glare is over everything; the earth looks peeled and excoriated; the raw heavens seem to bleed with the quick, hard

light. I have not got back my rooms in West Cedar street; they are occupied by a mesmeric healer. I am staying at an hotel, and it is very dreadful. Nothing for one's self; nothing for one's preferences and habits. No one to receive you when you arrive; you push in through a crowd, you edge up to a counter; you write your name in a horrible book, where every one may come and stare at it and finger it. A man behind the counter stares at you in silence; his stare seems to say to you, "What the devil do *you* want?" But after this stare he never looks at you again. He tosses down a key at you; he presses a bell; a savage Irishman arrives. "Take him away," he seems to say to the Irishman; but it is all done in silence; there is no answer to your own speech,—"What is to be done with me, please?" "Wait and you will see," the awful silence seems to say. There is a great crowd around you, but there is also a great stillness; every now and then you hear some one expectorate. There are a thousand people in this huge and hideous structure; they feed together in a big white-walled room. It is lighted by a thousand gas-jets, and heated by cast-iron screens, which vomit forth torrents of scorching air. The temperature is terrible; the atmosphere is more so; the furious light and heat seem to intensify the dreadful definiteness. When things are so ugly, they should not be so definite; and they are terribly ugly here. There is no mystery in the corners; there is no light and shade in the types. The people

are haggard and joyless ; they look as if they had no passions, no tastes, no senses. They sit feeding in silence, in the dry, hard light ; occasionally I hear the high, firm note of a child. The servants are black and familiar ; their faces shine as they shuffle about ; there are blue tones in their dark masks. They have no manners ; they address you, but they don't answer you ; they plant themselves at your elbow (it rubs their clothes as you eat), and watch you as if your proceedings were strange. They deluge you with iced water ; it's the only thing they will bring you ; if you look round to summon them, they have gone for more. If you read the newspaper, — which I don't, gracious Heaven ! I can't, — they hang over your shoulder and peruse it also. I always fold it up and present it to them ; the newspapers here are indeed for an African taste. There are long corridors defended by gusts of hot air ; down the middle swoops a pale little girl on parlor-skates. "Get out of my way !" she shrieks as she passes ; she has ribbons in her hair and frills on her dress ; she makes the tour of the immense hotel. I think of Puck, who put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes, and wonder what he said as he flitted by. A black waiter marches past me, bearing a tray, which he thrusts into my spine as he goes. It is laden with large white jugs ; they tinkle as he moves, and I recognize the unconsoling fluid. We are dying of iced water, of hot air, of gas. I sit in my room thinking of these things — this room of mine which is a chamber of

pain. The walls are white and bare, they shine in the rays of a horrible chandelier of imitation bronze, which depends from the middle of the ceiling. It flings a patch of shadow on a small table covered with white marble, of which the genial surface supports at the present moment the sheet of paper on which I address you; and when I go to bed (I like to read in bed, Harvard) it becomes an object of mockery and torment. It dangles at inaccessible heights; it stares me in the face; it flings the light upon the covers of my book, but not upon the page — the little French Elzevir that I love so well. I rise and put out the gas, and then my room becomes even lighter than before. Then a crude illumination from the hall, from the neighboring room, pours through the glass openings that surmount the two doors of my apartment. It covers my bed, where I toss and groan; it beats in through my closed lids; it is accompanied by the most vulgar, though the most human, sounds. I spring up to call for some help, some remedy; but there is no bell, and I feel desolate and weak. There is only a strange orifice in the wall, through which the traveller in distress may transmit his appeal. I fill it with incoherent sounds, and sounds more incoherent yet come back to me. I gather at last their meaning; they appear to constitute a somewhat stern inquiry. A hollow, impersonal voice wishes to know what I want, and the very question paralyzes me. I want everything — yet I want nothing, — nothing this hard impersonality can give! I want

my little corner of Paris ; I want the rich, the deep, the dark Old World ; I want to be out of this horrible place. Yet I can't confide all this to that mechanical tube ; it would be of no use ; a mocking laugh would come up from the office. Fancy appealing in these sacred, these intimate moments, to an "office" ; fancy calling out into indifferent space for a candle, for a curtain ! I pay incalculable sums in this dreadful house, and yet I have n't a servant to wait upon me. I fling myself back on my couch, and for a long time afterward the orifice in the wall emits strange murmurs and rumblings. It seems unsatisfied, indignant ; it is evidently scolding me for my vagueness. My vagueness, indeed, dear Harvard ! I loathe their horrible arrangements ; is n't that definite enough ? You asked me to tell you whom I see, and what I think of my friends. I have n't very many ; I don't feel at all *en rapport*. The people are very good, very serious, very devoted to their work ; but there is a terrible absence of variety of type. Every one is Mr. Jones, Mr. Brown ; and every one looks like Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown. They are thin ; they are diluted in the great tepid bath of Democracy ! They lack completeness of identity ; they are quite without modelling. No, they are not beautiful, my poor Harvard ; it must be whispered that they are not beautiful. You may say that they are as beautiful as the French, as the Germans ; but I can't agree with you there. The French, the Germans, have the greatest beauty of all, — the beauty of their ugliness,

—the beauty of the strange, the grotesque. These people are not even ugly ; they are only plain. Many of the girls are pretty ; but to be only pretty is (to my sense) to be plain. Yet I have had some talk. I have seen a woman. She was on the steamer, and I afterward saw her in New York, — a peculiar type, a real personality ; a great deal of modelling, a great deal of color, and yet a great deal of mystery. She was not, however, of this country ; she was a compound of far-off things. But she was looking for something here — like me. We found each other, and for a moment that was enough. I have lost her now ; I am sorry, because she liked to listen to me. She has passed away ; I shall not see her again. She liked to listen to me ; she almost understood !

VI.

FROM M. GUSTAVE LEJAUNE, OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY,
TO M. ADOLPHE BOUCHE, IN PARIS.

WASHINGTON, October 5.

I GIVE you my little notes ; you must make allowances for haste, for bad inns, for the perpetual scramble, for ill-humor. Everywhere the same impression, — the platitude of unbalanced democracy intensified by the platitude of the spirit of commerce. Everything on an immense scale — everything illustrated by millions of examples. My brother-in-law is always busy ; he has appointments, inspections,

interviews, disputes. The people, it appears, are incredibly sharp in conversation, in argument; they wait for you in silence at the corner of the road, and then they suddenly discharge their revolver. If you fall, they empty your pockets; the only chance is to shoot them first. With that, no amenities, no preliminaries, no manners, no care for the appearance. I wander about while my brother is occupied; I lounge along the streets; I stop at the corners; I look into the shops; *je regarde passer les femmes*. It's an easy country to see; one sees everything there is; the civilization is skin deep; you don't have to dig. This positive, practical, pushing *bourgeoisie* is always about its business; it lives in the street, in the hotel, in the train; one is always in a crowd — there are seventy-five people in the tramway. They sit in your lap; they stand on your toes; when they wish to pass, they simply push you. Everything in silence; they know that silence is golden, and they have the worship of gold. When the conductor wishes your fare, he gives you a poke, very serious, without a word. As for the types — but there is only one — they are all variations of the same — the *commis-voyageur* minus the gayety. The women are often pretty; you meet the young ones in the streets, in the trains, in search of a husband. They look at you frankly, coldly, judicially, to see if you will serve; but they don't want what you might think (*du moins on me l'assure*); they only want the husband. A Frenchman may mistake; he needs to be sure he is right,

and I always make sure. They begin at fifteen ; the mother sends them out ; it lasts all day (with an interval for dinner at a pastry-cook's) ; sometimes it goes on for ten years. . If they haven't found the husband then, they give it up ; they make place for the *cadettes*, as the number of women is enormous. No *salons*, no society, no conversation ; people don't receive at home ; the young girls have to look for the husband where they can. It is no disgrace not to find him — several have never done so. They continue to go about unmarried — from the force of habit, from the love of movement, without hopes, without regrets — no imagination, no sensibility, no desire for the convent. We have made several journeys, — few of less than three hundred miles. Enormous trains, enormous *wagons*, with beds and lavatories, and negroes who brush you with a big broom, as if they were grooming a horse. A bounding movement, a roaring noise, a crowd of people who look horribly tired, a boy who passes up and down throwing pamphlets and sweetmeats into your lap — that is an American journey. There are windows in the *wagons* — enormous, like everything else ; but there is nothing to see. The country is a void — no features, no objects, no details, nothing to show you that you are in one place more than another. *Aussi*, you are not in one place ; you are everywhere, anywhere ; the train goes a hundred miles an hour. The cities are all the same ; little houses ten feet high, or else big ones two hundred ; tramways, telegraph-poles,

enormous signs, holes in the pavement, oceans of mud, *commis-voyageurs*, young ladies looking for the husband. On the other hand, no beggars and no *cocottes* — none, at least, that you see. A colossal mediocrity, except (my brother-in-law tells me) in the machinery, which is magnificent. Naturally, no architecture (they make houses of wood and of iron), no art, no literature, no theatre. I have opened some of the books ; *mais ils ne se laissent pas lire*. No form, no matter, no style, no general ideas ; they seem to be written for children and young ladies. The most successful (those that they praise most) are the facetious ; they sell in thousands of editions. I have looked into some of the most *vantés* ; but you need to be forewarned, to know that they are amusing ; *des plaisanteries de croquemort*. They have a novelist with pretensions to literature, who writes about the chase for the husband and the adventures of the rich Americans in our corrupt old Europe, where their primeval candor puts the Europeans to shame. *C'est proprement écrit* ; but it's terribly pale. What isn't pale is the newspapers — enormous, like everything else (fifty columns of advertisements), and full of the *commérages* of a continent. And such a tone, *grand Dieu !* The amenities, the personalities, the recriminations, are like so many *coups de revolver*. Headings six inches tall ; correspondences from places one never heard of ; telegrams from Europe about Sarah Bernhardt ; little paragraphs about nothing at all ; the *menu* of the neighbor's dinner ; articles on

the European situation *à pouffer de rire*; all the *tripotage* of local politics. The *reportage* is incredible; I am chased up and down by the interviewers. The matrimonial infelicities of M. and Madame X. (they give the name), *tout au long*, with every detail — not in six lines, discreetly veiled, with an art of insinuation, as with us; but with all the facts (or the fictions), the letters, the dates, the places, the hours. I open a paper at hazard, and I find *au beau milieu*, *à propos* of nothing, the announcement — “Miss Susan Green has the longest nose in Western New York.” Miss Susan Green (*je me renseigne*) is a celebrated authoress; and the Americans have the reputation of spoiling their women. They spoil them *à coups de poing*. We have seen few interiors (no one speaks French); but if the newspapers give an idea of the domestic *mœurs*, the *mœurs* must be curious. The passport is abolished, but they have printed my *signalement* in these sheets, — perhaps for the young ladies who look for the husband. We went one night to the theatre; the piece was French (they are the only ones), but the acting was American — too American; we came out in the middle. The want of taste is incredible. An Englishman whom I met tells me that even the language corrupts itself from day to day; an Englishman ceases to understand. It encourages me to find that I am not the only one. There are things every day that one can’t describe. Such is Washington, where we arrived this morning, coming from Philadelphia. My brother-in-law wishes

to see the Bureau of Patents, and on our arrival he went to look at his machines, while I walked about the streets and visited the Capitol! The human machine is what interests me most. I don't even care for the political — for that's what they call their government here — “the machine.” It operates very roughly, and some day, evidently, it will explode. It is true that you would never suspect that they have a government; this is the principal seat, but, save for three or four big buildings, most of them *affreux*, it looks like a settlement of negroes. No movement, no officials, no authority, no embodiment of the State. Enormous streets, *comme toujours*, lined with little red houses where nothing ever passes but the tramway. The Capitol — a vast structure, false classic, white marble, iron and stucco, which has *assez grand air* — must be seen to be appreciated. The goddess of liberty on the top, dressed in a bear's skin; their liberty over here is the liberty of bears. You go into the Capitol as you would into a railway station; you walk about as you would in the Palais Royal. No functionaries, no door-keepers, no officers, no uniforms, no badges, no restrictions, no authority — nothing but a crowd of shabby people circulating in a labyrinth of spittoons. We are too much governed perhaps in France; but at least we have a certain incarnation of the national conscience, of the national dignity. The dignity is absent here, and I am told that the conscience is an abyss. “*L'état c'est moi*” even — I like that better than the spittoons.

These implements are architectural, monumental; they are the only monuments. *En somme*, the country is interesting, now that we too have the Republic; it is the biggest illustration, the biggest warning. It is the last word of democracy, and that word is — flatness. It is very big, very rich, and perfectly ugly. A Frenchman could n't live here; for life with us, after all, at the worst is a sort of appreciation. Here, there is nothing to appreciate. As for the people, they are the English *minus* the conventions. You can fancy what remains. The women, *pourtant*, are sometimes rather well turned. There was one at Philadelphia — I made her acquaintance by accident — whom it is probable I shall see again. She is not looking for the husband; she has already got one. It was at the hotel; I think the husband does n't matter. A Frenchman, as I have said, may mistake, and he needs to be sure he is right. *Aussi*, I always make sure!

VII.

FROM MARCELLUS COCKEREL, IN WASHINGTON, TO MRS.
COOLER, NÉE COCKEREL, AT OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

October 25.

I OUGHT to have written to you long before this, for I have had your last excellent letter for four months in my hands. The first half of that time I was still in Europe; the last I have spent on my

native soil. I think, therefore, my silence is owing to the fact that over there I was too miserable to write, and that here I have been too happy. I got back the 1st of September—you will have seen it in the papers. Delightful country, where one sees everything in the papers—the big, familiar, vulgar, good-natured, delightful papers, none of which has any reputation to keep up for anything but getting the news! I really think that has had as much to do as anything else with my satisfaction at getting home—the difference in what they call the “tone of the press.” In Europe it’s too dreary—the sapience, the solemnity, the false respectability, the verbosity, the long disquisitions on superannuated subjects. Here the newspapers are like the railroad trains, which carry everything that comes to the station, and have only the religion of punctuality. As a woman, however, you probably detest them; you think they are (the great word) vulgar. I admitted it just now, and I am very happy to have an early opportunity to announce to you that that idea has quite ceased to have any terrors for me. There are some conceptions to which the female mind can never rise. Vulgarity is a stupid, superficial, question-begging accusation, which has become to-day the easiest refuge of mediocrity. Better than anything else, it saves people the trouble of thinking, and anything which does that succeeds. You must know that in these last three years in Europe I have become terribly vulgar myself; that’s one service my travels

have rendered me. By three years in Europe I mean three years in foreign parts altogether, for I spent several months of that time in Japan, India, and the rest of the East. Do you remember when you bade me good-by in San Francisco, the night before I embarked for Yokohama? You foretold that I should take such a fancy to foreign life that America would never see me more, and that if *you* should wish to see me (an event you were good enough to regard as possible), you would have to make a rendezvous in Paris or in Rome. I think we made one (which you never kept), but I shall never make another for those cities. It was in Paris, however, that I got your letter; I remember the moment as well as if it were (to my honor) much more recent. You must know that, among many places I dislike, Paris carries the palm. I am bored to death there; it's the home of every humbug. The life is full of that false comfort which is worse than discomfort, and the small, fat, irritable people give me the shivers. I had been making these reflections even more devoutly than usual one very tiresome evening toward the beginning of last summer, when, as I re-entered my hotel at ten o'clock, the little reptile of a portress handed me your gracious lines. I was in a villanous humor. I had been having an over-dressed dinner in a stuffy restaurant, and had gone from there to a suffocating theatre, where, by way of amusement, I saw a play in which blood and lies were the least of the horrors. The theatres over there are insupportable; the atmosphere is pestilen-

tial. People sit with their elbows in your sides; they squeeze past you every half-hour. It was one of my bad moments; I have a great many in Europe. The conventional, perfunctory play, all in falsetto, which I seemed to have seen a thousand times; the horrible faces of the people; the pushing, bullying *ouvreuse*, with her false politeness and her real rapacity, drove me out of the place at the end of an hour; and, as it was too early to go home, I sat down before a *café* on the Boulevard, where they served me a glass of sour, watery beer. There on the Boulevard, in the summer night, life itself was even uglier than the play, and it wouldn't do for me to tell you what I saw. Besides, I was sick of the Boulevard, with its eternal grimace and the deadly sameness of the *article de Paris*, which pretends to be so various—the shop-windows a wilderness of rubbish and the passers-by a procession of manikins. Suddenly it came over me that I was supposed to be amusing myself—my face was a yard long—and that you probably at that moment were saying to your husband: “He stays away so long! What a good time he must be having!” The idea was the first thing that had made me smile for a month; I got up and walked home, reflecting, as I went, that I was “seeing Europe,” and that, after all, one *must* see Europe. It was because I had been convinced of this that I came out, and it is because the operation has been brought to a close that I have been so happy for the last eight weeks. I was very consci-

entious about it, and, though your letter that night made me abominably homesick, I held out to the end, knowing it to be once for all. I sha'n't trouble Europe again ; I shall see America for the rest of my days. My long delay has had the advantage that now, at least, I can give you my impressions—I don't mean of Europe ; impressions of Europe are easy to get—but of this country, as it strikes the re-instated exile. Very likely you'll think them queer ; but keep my letter, and twenty years hence they will be quite commonplace. They won't even be vulgar. It was very deliberate, my going round the world. I knew that one ought to see for one's self, and that I should have eternity, so to speak, to rest. I travelled energetically ; I went everywhere and saw everything ; took as many letters as possible, and made as many acquaintances. In short, I held my nose to the grindstone. The upshot of it all is that I have got rid of a superstition. We have so many, that one the less—perhaps the biggest of all—makes a real difference in one's comfort. The superstition in question—of course you have it—is that there is no salvation but through Europe. Our salvation is here, if we have eyes to see it, and the salvation of Europe into the bargain ; that is, if Europe is to be saved, which I rather doubt. Of course, you'll call me a bird o' freedom, a braggart, a waver of the stars and stripes ; but I'm in the delightful position of not minding in the least what any one calls me. I have n't a mission ; I don't want

to preach ; I have simply arrived at a state of mind ; I have got Europe off my back. You have no idea how it simplifies things, and how jolly it makes me feel. Now I can live ; now I can talk. If we wretched Americans could only say once for all, "Oh, Europe be hanged !" we should attend much better to our proper business. We have simply to live our life, and the rest will look after itself. You will probably inquire what it is that I like better over here, and I will answer that it's simply — life. Disagreeables for disagreeables, I prefer our own. The way I have been bored and bullied in foreign parts, and the way I have had to say I found it pleasant ! For a good while this appeared to be a sort of congenital obligation, but one fine day it occurred to me that there was no obligation at all, and that it would ease me immensely to admit to myself that (for me, at least) all those things had no importance. I mean the things they rub into you in Europe ; the tiresome international topics, the petty politics, the stupid social customs, the baby-house scenery. The vastness and freshness of this American world, the great scale and great pace of our development, the good sense and good nature of the people, console me for there being no cathedrals and no Titians. I hear nothing about Prince Bismarck and Gambetta, about the Emperor William and the Czar of Russia, about Lord Beaconsfield and the Prince of Wales. I used to get so tired of their Mumbo-Jumbo of a Bismarck, of his secrets and surprises, his mysterious intentions and oracular words.

They revile us for our party politics ; but what are all the European jealousies and rivalries, their armaments and their wars, their rapacities and their mutual lies, but the intensity of the spirit of party ? what question, what interest, what idea, what need of mankind, is involved in any of these things ? Their big, pompous armies, drawn up in great silly rows, their gold lace, their salaams, their hierarchies, seem a pastime for children ; there 's a sense of humor and of reality over here that laughs at all that. Yes, we are nearer the reality — we are nearer what they will all have to come to. The questions of the future are social questions, which the Bismarcks and Beaconsfields are very much afraid to see settled ; and the sight of a row of supercilious potentates holding their peoples like their personal property, and bristling all over, to make a mutual impression, with feathers and sabres, strikes us as a mixture of the grotesque and the abominable. What do we care for the mutual impressions of potentates who amuse themselves with sitting on people ? Those things are their own affair, and they ought to be shut up in a dark room to have it out together. Once one feels, over here, that the great questions of the future are social questions, that a mighty tide is sweeping the world to democracy, and that this country is the biggest stage on which the drama can be enacted, the fashionable European topics seem petty and parochial. They talk about things that we have settled ages ago, and the solemnity with which they propound to you their

little domestic embarrassments makes a heavy draft on one's good nature. In England they were talking about the Hares and Rabbits Bill, about the extension of the County Franchise, about the Dissenters' Burials, about the Deceased Wife's Sister, about the abolition of the House of Lords, about heaven knows what ridiculous little measure for the propping-up of their ridiculous little country. And they call *us* provincial! It is hard to sit and look respectable while people discuss the utility of the House of Lords and the beauty of a State Church, and it's only in a dowdy, musty civilization that you'll find them doing such things. The lightness and clearness of the social air, that's the great relief in these parts. The gentility of bishops, the propriety of parsons, even the impressiveness of a restored cathedral, give less of a charm to life than that. I used to be furious with the bishops and parsons, with the humbuggery of the whole affair, which every one was conscious of, but which people agreed not to expose, because they would be compromised all round. The convenience of life over here, the quick and simple arrangements, the absence of the spirit of routine, are a blessed change from the stupid stiffness with which I struggled for two long years. There were people with swords and cockades who used to order me about; for the simplest operation of life I had to kootoo to some bloated official. When it was a question of my doing a little differently from others, the bloated official gasped as if I had given him a blow

on the stomach ; he needed to take a week to think of it. On the other hand, it's impossible to take an American by surprise ; he is ashamed to confess that he has not the wit to do a thing that another man has had the wit to think of. Besides being as good as his neighbor, he must therefore be as clever,—which is an affliction only to people who are afraid he may be cleverer. If this general efficiency and spontaneity of the people—the union of the sense of freedom with the love of knowledge—isn't the very essence of a high civilization, I don't know what a high civilization is. I felt this greater ease on my first railroad journey,—felt the blessing of sitting in a train where I could move about, where I could stretch my legs and come and go, where I had a seat and a window to myself, where there were chairs and tables and food and drink. The villanous little boxes on the European trains, in which you are stuck down in a corner, with doubled-up knees, opposite to a row of people—often most offensive types—who stare at you for ten hours on end—these were part of my two years' ordeal. The large, free way of doing things here is everywhere a pleasure. In London, at my hotel, they used to come to me on Saturday to make me order my Sunday's dinner, and when I asked for a sheet of paper, they put it into the bill. The meagreness, the stinginess, the perpetual expectation of a sixpence, used to exasperate me. Of course, I saw a great many people who were pleasant ; but as I am writing to you, and not to one

of them, I may say that they were dreadfully apt to be dull. The imagination among the people I see here is more flexible ; and then they have the advantage of a larger horizon. It's not bounded on the north by the British aristocracy, and on the south by the *scrutin de liste*. (I mix up the countries a little, but they are not worth the keeping apart.) The absence of little conventional measurements, of little cut-and-dried judgments, is an immense refreshment. We are more analytic, more discriminating, more familiar with realities. As for manners, there are bad manners everywhere, but an aristocracy is bad manners organized. (I don't mean that they may not be polite among themselves, but they are rude to every one else.) The sight of all these growing millions simply minding their business, is impressive to me, — more so than all the gilt buttons and padded chests of the Old World ; and there is a certain powerful type of "practical" American (you'll find him chiefly in the West), who does n't brag as I do (I'm not practical), but who quietly feels that he has the Future in his vitals, — a type that strikes me more than any I met in your favorite countries. Of course you'll come back to the cathedrals and Titians, but there's a thought that helps one to do without them, — the thought that though there's an immense deal of plainness, there's little misery, little squalor, little degradation. There is no regular wife-beating class, and there are none of the stultified peasants of whom it takes so many to make a European noble.

The people here are more conscious of things ; they invent, they act, they answer for themselves ; they are not (I speak of social matters) tied up by authority and precedent. We shall have all the Titians by and by, and we shall move over a few cathedrals. You had better stay here if you want to have the best. Of course, I am a roaring Yankee ; but you'll call me that if I say the least, so I may as well take my ease and say the most. Washington's a most entertaining place ; and here at least, at the seat of government, one is n't overgoverned. In fact, there's no government at all to speak of ; it seems too good to be true. The first day I was here I went to the Capitol, and it took me ever so long to figure to myself that I had as good a right there as any one else,—that the whole magnificent pile (*it is* magnificent by the way) was in fact my own. In Europe one does n't rise to such conceptions, and my spirit had been broken in Europe. The doors were gaping wide — I walked all about ; there were no door-keepers, no officers, nor flunkeys, — not even a policeman to be seen. It seemed strange not to see a uniform, if only as a patch of color. But this is n't government by livery. The absence of these things is odd at first ; you seem to miss something, to fancy the machine has stopped. It has n't, though ; it only works without fire and smoke. At the end of three days, this simple negative impression — the fact is that there are no soldiers nor spies, nothing but plain black coats — begins to affect the imagination,

becomes vivid, majestic, symbolic. It ends by being more impressive than the biggest review I saw in Germany. Of course, I'm a roaring Yankee; but one has to take a big brush to copy a big model. The future is here, of course; but it is n't only that — the present is here as well. You will complain that I don't give you any personal news; but I am more modest for myself than for my country. I spent a month in New York, and while I was there I saw a good deal of a rather interesting girl who came over with me in the steamer, and whom for a day or two I thought I should like to marry. But I should n't. She has been spoiled by Europe!

VIII.

FROM MISS AURORA CHURCH, IN NEW YORK, TO MISS
WHITESIDE, IN PARIS.

January 9.

I TOLD you (after we landed) about my agreement with mamma — that I was to have my liberty for three months, and if at the end of this time I should n't have made a good use of it, I was to give it back to her. Well, the time is up to-day, and I am very much afraid I have n't made a good use of it. In fact, I have n't made any use of it at all — I have n't got married, for that is what mamma meant by our little bargain. She has been trying to marry me in Europe, for years, without a *dot*, and as she has never

(to the best of my knowledge) even come near it, she thought at last that, if she were to leave it to me, I might do better. I couldn't certainly do worse. Well, my dear, I have done very badly — that is, I haven't done at all. I haven't even tried. I had an idea that this affair came of itself over here ; but it hasn't come to me. I won't say I am disappointed, for I haven't, on the whole, seen any one I should like to marry. When you marry people over here, they expect you to love them, and I haven't seen any one I should like to love. I don't know what the reason is, but they are none of them what I have thought of. It may be that I have thought of the impossible ; and yet I have seen people in Europe whom I should have liked to marry. It is true, they were almost always married to some one else. What I *am* disappointed in is simply having to give back my liberty. I don't wish particularly to be married ; and I do wish to do as I like — as I have been doing for the last month. All the same, I am sorry for poor mamma, as nothing has happened that she wished to happen. To begin with, we are not appreciated, not even by the Rucks, who have disappeared, in the strange way in which people over here seem to vanish from the world. We have made no sensation ; my new dresses count for nothing (they all have better ones) ; our philological and historical studies don't show. We have been told we might do better in Boston ; but, on the other hand, mamma hears that in Boston the people only marry their cousins. Then mamma is

out of sorts because the country is exceedingly dear and we have spent all our money. Moreover, I have neither eloped, nor been insulted, nor been talked about, nor—so far as I know—deteriorated in manners or character; so that mamma is wrong in all her previsions. I think she would have rather liked me to be insulted. But I have been insulted as little as I have been adored. They don't adore you over here; they only make you think they are going to. Do you remember the two gentlemen who were on the ship, and who, after we arrived here, came to see me *à tour de rôle*? At first I never dreamed they were making love to me, though mamma was sure it must be that; then, as it went on a good while, I thought perhaps it *was* that; and I ended by seeing that it wasn't anything! It was simply conversation; they are very fond of conversation over here. Mr. Leverett and Mr. Cockerel disappeared one fine day, without the smallest pretension to having broken my heart, I am sure, though it only depended on me to think they had! All the gentlemen are like that; you ~~can~~ can't tell what they mean; everything is very confused; society appears to consist of a sort of innocent jilting. I think, on the whole, I *am* a little disappointed—I don't mean about one's not marrying; I mean about the life generally. It seems so different at first, that you expect it will be very exciting; and then you find that, after all, when you have walked out for a week or two by yourself and driven out with a gentleman in a buggy, that's about all

there is of it, as they say here. Mamma is very angry at not finding more to dislike ; she admitted yesterday that, once one has got a little settled, the country has not even the merit of being hateful. This has evidently something to do with her suddenly proposing three days ago that we should go to the West. Imagine my surprise at such an idea coming from mamma ! The people in the pension—who, as usual, wish immensely to get rid of her—have talked to her about the West, and she has taken it up with a kind of desperation. You see, we must do something ; we can't simply remain here. We are rapidly being ruined, and we are not—so to speak—getting married. Perhaps it will be easier in the West ; at any rate, it will be cheaper, and the country will have the advantage of being more hateful. It is a question between that and returning to Europe, and for the moment mamma is balancing. I say nothing : I am really indifferent ; perhaps I shall marry a pioneer. I am just thinking how I shall give back my liberty. It really won't be possible ; I haven't got it any more ; I have given it away to others. Mamma may recover it, if she can, from *them* ! She comes in at this moment to say that we must push farther—she has decided for the West. Wonderful mamma ! It appears that my real chance is for a pioneer—they have sometimes millions. But fancy us in the West !

THE END.



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